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The Philosophy of Happiness.

The Philosophy of Happiness.

JUDO CLASS
LONDON

THE

Philosophy of Happiness:

LECTURES

ON

THE CRISIS OF BEING, AND THE PROGRESS OF BEING.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

BY

DAVID THOMAS, D.D.,

Compiler of "The Biblical Liturgy"; "The Augustine Hymn-Book"; Editor of "The Homilist"; Author of "The Homiletical Commentary"; &c., &c.

ELEVENTH THOUSAND.

London:

R. D. DICKINSON, 92, FARRINGDON STREET.

1869.

100. S. 488.

To my Children,

THE

DEAREST OBJECTS OF MY HEART,

THE MOST SUSCEPTIBLE SUBJECTS OF MY INFLUENCE,

AND

MY MOST SOLEMN CHARGE FROM GOD,

I Dedicate this Little Book.

MY DEAR CHILDREN,—Were fame or gain my object, I should seek my dedicatee from amongst the illustrious ones of the age. Thereby, perchance, I might brighten my obscure name with the reflected beams of another, obtain a wider sphere, and a warmer welcome—and thus, perhaps, borrow a feather for the arrow of my humble thoughts that would waft them to hearts farther off. Patronage, however, in the free and ever-growing realm of literature, I repudiate as an impropriety, to say the least. The spurious in thought should never have it; the true will live and flourish without its aid. To whom can an author with greater propriety dedicate thoughts on the great problem of destiny, than to his children? I bequeath this little book to you, my dear ones. True, it is but a *mental* legacy; but if you feel as immortals should, you will prize it the more on this account. In neither mercantile value, nor literary merit, is it worth much. But to me, the great principles that run through it as its warm life-blood, are more valuable than

empires. Far sooner would I see you in vital sympathy with them, and following them out in your every-day life, than behold you the inheritors of lordly estates, or the sovereigns of mighty kingdoms. It is better to live in a true thought than in a great palace—to receive a right principle than a monarch's crown. Right principles will shower rich blessings on your being, when the last vestige of earth's magnificence shall have sunk into the abyss of ages, to rise no more. Accept, then, my loved ones, these thoughts as the honest products of your father's humble intellect, and the warm breathings of your father's loving heart. At present, some of you are unable to read this little volume, and none, perhaps, are fully competent to read it with *interest* yet.* You are in the bud of being, I am in my prime; it is dim dawn with you, it is high noon with me; you are not able, therefore, to reach my mental stand-place yet. Read it then, when the days of childhood have passed—read it in the glowing light of youth—read it when the full warm stream of manhood and womanhood shall fill your veins. Ere then, perhaps, the eyes that have wet this inscriptive page with involuntary tears of love and prayer for you will be sealed in death, and the hand that holds this pen will have returned to dust. Albeit, even then, the *true* in its thoughts will be true as ever. As the spirit of music survives the broken harp, true thoughts outlive their author. Adieu! my dear ones, only for the passing hour as yet, thank God, adieu! That true progress may be yours, and that we may meet and mingle high up the ever-ascending path of a happy destiny, is the strongest desire and most earnest prayer of your loving father.

THE AUTHOR.

* This Dedication was written in the year 1854, and is here reproduced in deference to the earnest wishes of the family.

PREFACE.

THIS work consists of two distinct series of Lectures, delivered at different times to the young men of the Author's congregation. They were suggested by the discussions in the "Stockwell Young Men's Debating Society," of which he was the president. This Society at the time had many members of remarkable ability, some of whom were sceptics in relation to Christianity and who were accustomed to urge their objections with a considerable amount of argumentative and rhetoric force. The Author endeavoured in these Lectures to obviate those objections, not by a formal refutation, which seldom answers the purpose, but by unfolding those principles of immutable truth which necessarily destroy the very foundation of all sceptical thought. There are truths, underlying the consciousness of universal man, which, when brought into the full clear light of reason, will cause the most brilliant infidelities to pale as torch-light in the sun. The work has received a heartier welcome and a wider acceptance than

the Author ever ventured to anticipate. TEN THOUSAND copies of each series have been disposed of by the publishers, and there have been abundant assurances from young men from every part of the world, that the Lectures have tended to the solution of their difficulties, and the establishment of their faith.

This volume contains nothing like a dogmatic teaching of Christianity. There are two methods of presenting the Gospel; the one unfolds it as a system of doctrine; the other, as a provision for souls. In the former case, every part is made to fit into some theological scheme; and in the other, every part is made to suit the nature and meet the wants of man. The former method has been tried for ages, and the world is tired of it; the importance of the latter is beginning to be felt more deeply than ever, and the most thinking teachers of every church, thank God! are employing it with energy and success. This was the method which Jesus adopted. He spoke not to suit systems, but souls. His words were spirit and life. This seems to the Author the only method of presenting the Gospel, so as to realize its grand design. Your systems of divinity the Author will not disparage; but his impression is, that they can no more answer the purpose of the Gospel, than *pneumatics* can do the work of the atmosphere. In the case of Christianity, as well as the

air, the world can live without its scientific truths; but it must have the free circulation of its vital elements. If the Author, therefore, in this book, has given the cardinals of the Gospel, in their connection with the laws and wants of human nature, rather than in their connection with any intellectual system, he has done so from the conviction that such is the true method.

The Lectures were delivered many years ago in the midst of great ministerial labour, and were published separately, as delivered; afterwards they were bound together in volumes. They were the author's first literary productions. The book is a transcript of *spoken* thought. There has been no attempt at classic polish or artistic ornament. The sentences are the first and natural form which the idea assumed. The object throughout has been to give the largest amount of thought in the fewest words. It was not written either for the literary *savant* or the technical *divine*, but for young men. Hence it must not be tried by any rigorous standard either of verbal criticism or of theological creed. The author has often thought of re-casting the whole and moulding the two leading sections into a systematic treatise, but he has never had time to do so. The work has, therefore, to go forth once more in the old form. The principal difference being that the two parts are bound in one volume under a common title.

Were the author now to sit down to write a severely systematic treatise on the Philosophy of Happiness, he might differently group his thoughts and shape his arguments. Albeit he is disposed to believe that every intelligent and candid reader will see that the work, as it is, logically creates its new title. He may specially refer to Lectures VI., IX., and X. in proof of this. May its errors die, and its truths live and give life !

Holly Bush,
Loughborough Park,
London, May 7th, 1869.

PART I.

THE CRISIS OF BEING.

LECTURE I.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

The plan of the lecture. A word to the sceptics of the age: to the secular philanthropists: to religious teachers: to the young—their responsibilities and power.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

THERE are two methods of presenting the gospel; the one, unfolds it as a system of doctrine; the other, as a provision for souls. In the former case, every part is made to fit into some theological scheme; and in the other, every part is made to suit the nature and meet the wants of mind. The former method has been tried for ages, and the world is tired of it; the importance of the latter is beginning to be felt more deeply than ever, and the most thinking teachers of every church, thank God! are employing it with energy and success. This was the method which Jesus adopted. He spoke not to suit systems, but souls. His words were spirit and life. This seems to me the only method of presenting the gospel, so as to realize its grand design. Your systems of divinity I will not disparage; but my impression is, that they can no more answer the purpose of the gospel, than *pneumatics* can answer the purpose of the atmosphere. In the case of Christianity, as well as the air, the world can live without its scientific truths: but it must have the free breathing of their vital elements. If, therefore, in my lectures I give the cardinals

of the gospel, in their connexion with the laws and wants of human nature, rather than in their connexion with any intellectual system, I shall do so from the conviction that such is the true method; a method which not only reveals the adaptation, but demonstrates the necessity of the gospel to human nature. And this, surely, is the strongest argument for its Divinity, though we are not aware that apologetic theology has ever yet employed it.

Whilst the subject of my lectures addresses itself to man as man, I would at the outset invite to it the special attention of certain classes.

Our subject will give us a word to you—the candid sceptics of this age. I do not mean either theoretic atheists, or those sensual infidels who rave against Christian verities which they have never examined. Both these classes seem to me beyond the pale of argument. The first misinterpret the many-linked chain of logic—causation; and the second are under the influence of passions and habits that warp their judgment and obscure their vision. The "pearls" of argument are not for such; they would only trample them under feet, and snarl at the giver, if not rend him to pieces. But we mean those who loathe the dogmatism of all parties, pursue the path of inquiry, and withhold their faith in the divinity of the Scriptures for the want of, what they consider, sufficient evidence. There are many such in this age, and some of them are intellectually among our choicest spirits. It is to you of this class that I have a word. I give you credit for sincerity, and that with no grudging heart or feigned liberality. I appreciate your difficulties, for I have struggled with the same in days that are gone, and the echo of the conflict still lingers within.

I sympathize not with the way in which theology has often treated you. I deprecate its arrogant spirit, its high hand, its coarse speech; and many of its arguments do I renounce and deplore. I share your hatred of priest-craft, cant, and dogmatism. In love for free thought and mental independency I cannot yield to you. But in your rejection of Christianity I see not only your injustice in the treatment of some of the elements of evidence, but your ignorance of others, which are, perhaps, the most cogent. To me, its most forcible credential lies in its *perfect congruity with man's nature and wants.* I receive it as divine, because it accords with every intuition, responds to my deepest questions, and provides for the profoundest wants of my being. I feel it true to my nature. This is the branch of evidence which the succeeding lectures incidentally present, and which I intreat you to ponder. You believe in *human progress;* do you not? Yes, on no subject are you more eloquent than this. But is it true that the progress of man consists in the increase of strength to fulfil, with happiness to himself, all the great functions of his being? Is it true that a supreme sympathy with God is, in the nature of the case, necessary to this? And is it true, that Christianity and nothing but Christianity, can generate this sympathy in the human heart? Are those points which we shall endeavour to establish, true? If not, expose to us their falsehood, and you will deliver us from a delusion, and thereby do us no little service. But if they are true, let your conduct toward Christianity be that of logical consistency. I ask no more.

Our subject will give us a word to you—the secular philanthro-

pists of the age. We approve your aim, we give you credit for sincere intentions, and honour the spirit which inspires you. But we have an ever-deepening impression, the grounds of which will hereafter appear—that if you employ not Christianity as your chief instrument, you will accomplish but very little *real* service for your race. You must know from your own nature and observation, as well as from the Bible, *that every evil that afflicts humanity takes its rise in the heart.* Disease, poverty, ignorance, as well as wicked practices and corrupt institutions, emanate from this source. This is the soil whence springs every baneful plant—the fountain whence starts every noxious stream. Philosophically we shall show that there can be no true progress where there is not in the heart supreme sympathy with the ABSOLUTE ONE. And what can produce this? Your sanitary boards, your reformatory associations, your asylums, your institutes, your halls of science, and crystal palaces are all good in their way: they ameliorate physical woes, increase worldly comforts, improve man's qualification for the secular duties of life, polish his habits, and lend a charm to his manners; but as they cannot generate this heart-sympathy, they do not serve him in all the faculties, aspects, and futurities of his being. Christianity alone can do this. This it is designed to do, and this it does. So long, therefore, as you neglect the use of this, as the *chief* instrument in your philanthropic engagements, you are only making "clean the outside of the platter," you are only veneering rotten wood, you are only sculpturing cold dead stone into the graceful forms of life. The high civilization of which you boast, and to whose *promotion you* consecrate your efforts, checks the evil, but

does not cure it; it garbs the deformity in beauteous robes, but removes it not. It is no more the progress of man, than the growth of the little branches sprouting from the dead trunk is the growth of the tree, from whose corrupting elements they draw their life. The true Christian is the only philosophical philanthropist—he strikes the serpent upon the head, he seeks to make the heart of humanity right, and he knows, that if the heart be made right, the poet's golden age will dawn and Eden will bloom again.

Our subject will give us a word to you—the religious teachers of the age. No class of men amongst us sustain a more important position than you. You live nearer the fountain-head of social influence—you can colour and direct the streams as they start on their endless course. You, of all men, are in the closest proximity to the world's heart. By appealing to the religious sentiment, you stir the fontal depths of influence—you touch primary springs in the great machine of human life. We approve both the *end* and the *means* of your mission;—the former being the spiritual restoration of humanity, and the latter "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." But suffer us to say, that we approve, not always, of the *way* in which those means are employed. If there be truth in one of the leading positions of these lectures, namely, that the grand work of Christianity is to generate and nourish in the human heart supreme sympathy toward God; then, we think, it should be presented, not mainly as a revelation of ideas to sustain certain theological theories, or ecclesiastical systems; nor as the revelation of an incensed judge robed in vengeance, ever ready to strike the terrible blow

of retribution; but as a revelation of GOD'S LOVE. *Love alone can beget love.* All the dark aspects of the divine character disclosed in the Bible, are but modifications of love, and should be thus explained:—they are only dark strokes to make the picture of His love more prominent and bright. The deep gloom of hell, like the midnight of earth, arises from turning its face away from the sun. The reason of men discovers divine love everywhere in nature. It sees it in the minerals of the mountains and in the treasures of the deep; in the springing blade, the blooming flower, and the bending tree; in the internal organism, and external provision, of all material and mental existences; in the flowing light and the rolling atmosphere; in the changing temperatures and the circling seasons. Goodness is an ubiquitous presence to the open eye—an eternal anthem to the open ear of reason. What men find in nature will they not ever look for in a divine revelation? My brethren, humanity stands at your side, and asks you with imploring looks, to give it not your theories and theologies, but a *loving God.* Its cry is, "Show us the Father." It wants a Father; not the technical Father of a cold theology, but the real warm-hearted Father of the soul—"The living Father." Rise to the holy hills, catch the warm rays of paternal love, and flash them on the souls of men, and you will do your work.

Our subject will give us a word to you—the young people of the age. We are more anxious to influence you than any other class, and we have more hope of doing so. To you, therefore, my remarks will have a special, though not an exclusive reference. You are thus singled out for particular instruction, not because I regard you as more unin-

med in judgment, corrupt in sentiment, or depraved in
›it, than any other section of the community, but
:ause of the importance I attach to the position which
ı hold in the social world. You, my young brothers,
: objects of interest to all thinking and right-hearted
n. Our noblest institutions, our social interests, our
igious liberty, our political destiny, will soon be com-
tted to your hands. You will be the trustees and
ırdians of all we hold most dear. Rights, for which
ıerations have struggled, and our fathers have bled, are
be entrusted to your care. The progress of civilization
l the hopes of religion depend on you. You may either
:ck or speed the onward and upward march of our
g-degraded race. None of the generations of young
n who have preceded you, ever sustained such a re-
›nsible position. The past has given to you its accu-
lated experience to study, its precious productions to
ırd, its complicated forces to direct, and its profoundest
›blems to solve—problems on whose wise solution are
pended the interests of millions yet to come. Think
: this the utterance of hasty thought. It is the language
sober and deliberate conviction. It is not designed as a
ising compliment, to secure your favour, or to enlist your
:ntion; but as a solemn reason why you are thus become
special objects of these lectures, and why you should
der to the subject the attention of a mind, docile,
ious, and earnest. Your aspirations after progress are
vent, your faculties are free, and your facilities abound.
bits have not deadened your sensibilities, nor have
judices crippled your powers. The copious dews of a
ght morning glisten on your budding energies, and the

healthiest airs of opening spring come to you in rolling waves of life. Your advent is a bright one compared with all the periods that are gone. Never was the social atmosphere more salubrious; never did the sun of truth shine more brightly; never were the means of true culture more abundant, and never was its science better understood.

We want you to feel what is the gist of our thesis, namely, that there is *no true progress apart from godliness, and no godliness apart from Christianity.* Your genius may be of the finest type, and your intellectual attainments of the highest order, but, if destitute of supreme sympathy with your Maker, you have not the breath of spiritual life in you: the true inspiration of being, the soul of all greatness, is not yours. Without this, your spiritual faculties are like the diseased folk at the Pool of Bethesda, weak and helpless. But let this enter, and "the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up." It gives a new life with new senses and powers. It makes the universe a new thing to you, robes it in lovelier forms, causes it to peal with sublimer music, and teem with higher beings. "Let my heart," says Fichte, "be once closed against earthly desires, and the universe will appear before me in a glorified form; the dead heavy mass, which did but fill up space, has disappeared, and in its place there rushes by the bright everlasting flood of life and power from its infinite source. All life, O Omnipotent Father, is thy life! And the eye of religion alone penetrates to the realms of truth and beauty."*

* See "The Destination of Man."

My young friends, human nature, apart from godliness, is little, worthless, and lost—lost to truth, virtue and greatness—lost to the grandeur of the universe, the end of being, and the enjoyment of the Infinite.

LECTURE II.

THE MENTAL HISTORY OF A MANLY DECISION.

The importance of the subject. Three things implied in religious decision: the existence of a religious object; a capacity to turn to this religious object; and a sufficiency of reason to move this capacity Godwards. The subject of the present lecture involves three mental stages: —I. The reception of new knowledge; a new purpose always requires new knowledge—Christianity the necessary knowledge. II. The experience of new attachments. Attachments determine man's volitions, &c. III. The adoption of a new life. This follows in causative order from the other two. A new knowledge produces new attachments, and new attachments give a new direction to the will. The first is the action of the intellect, the second the action of the affections, and the third the action of the will—the entire man.

THE MENTAL HISTORY OF A MANLY DECISION.

MANLY DECISION is the subject which I am anxious to bring under your notice. It may be asked, Why not take a more popular topic? Is not this too tame for the natural vivacity of the young mind—too trite for its love of the new? Why not select a theme whose freshness would charm the imagination, or whose speculative character would suggest new trains of thought? Our reply is, that the most popular subject is not always the most useful or necessary. Moral goodness is a higher end than intellectual gratification. Ideas, however brilliant, are morally worthless, unless they lodge the seeds of virtue in hearts where they are not, or help on their development where happily they are already sown. But the thinking among you will form no mean estimate of our subject. *Decision* is a noble element of character. The vacillating man can never realize greatness in anything. He wastes his impulses and time in hesitancy. He poises too long between opposite forces, and when he moves onward, it is with the faltering step of indecision. His faculties are relaxed—they are not condensed into a manly force by a determined will. He may become wealthy by what is called fortune, and by fortune

be adorned with titles and invested with office, but never *great.* Many men flatter him, some may despise him, but not a man will *reverence* him. He has been carried up the hill of eminence like a child—thither he has not walked as a man, alone. A resoluteness of purpose, an invincible determination—these are the chief pledges of success in every human enterprise—the chief ingredients in the make of every great man. In every career of life, we have noble specimens of what a determined will can do. No power on earth is equal to its force. The man of inflexible purpose is daunted by no difficulties. He bids mountains depart from his path, and they flee away—hostile circumstances cease their opposition, and they surrender. He makes his own fortune. He steps to his own place, and men honour him. The greatest tradesman in the mercantile world, scholar in the literary, hero in the political, and saint in the religious, are all illustrations of the energy and worth of a decided mind. If you would fully estimate the value of *decision*, even in secular things, read Forster's inimitable Essay. On the page of his deep, broad, and brilliant thinkings, it appears in surpassing grandeur. I regret that he has not given a fuller revelation of its religious aspect, for in this respect it is incomparably the most glorious. Secular decision in business, literature, or politics, is a thing of great moment in such spheres of action; but *religious decision* is of the mightiest importance in every conceivable department of life. The former may be indispensable to make a great merchant, artist, scholar, or politician; but the latter is indispensable to make a great *man.* The former can only secure the concentration of some of the elements and faculties of the

oul. *Conscience* and the *religious faculty*—the divinest ›owers of human nature—will never give their concurrence vhere *secular aims* are held supreme; but the latter calls ›ut *every* element, puts each power in its place, unites *all* o one object, and makes the soul "mighty through God" n seeking its attainment. The former may be necessary o enable a man to play a successful part in the earthly :oncerns of human life, but the latter, to qualify him to ıttend to the interests of his *entire* being—spiritual as well ıs material—eternal as well as temporal. The former nakes earth an end—the latter, a means. Religious de-:ision puts earth in its place—makes it a stepping-stone :o the skies. It is the CRISIS OF BEING. These remarks will show what I mean by religious decision:—it is not a purpose to subscribe to any particular system of belief, to ıdopt any particular form of worship, or to identify one's self with any particular class of religionists; but a determined and supreme purpose to obey God, and to promote goodness—a will, fully resolved "to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God." There are a few things implied in this subject, the notice of which will serve, in some measure, to illustrate its meaning, and to expose the basis on which we shall found our subsequent remarks.

The existence of a religious object. Decision implies an object—religious decision, a religious object. The religious object of the mind is the God of the mind. If there be no God, the subject has no meaning; it is a superstitious phantom, an idle dream, and the sooner the delusion is exposed the better. But if there be a God, who built up this wondrous fabric, formed this earth, created its

mighty oceans, upheaved its everlasting hills, painted its lovely landscapes, breathed life into its teeming tribes, and encircled it with blazing suns and stars,—a God in whom "we live, and move, and have our being,"—then our subject has a meaning, *profound* and *solemn*. A formal argument for the existence of such a Being could easily be constructed. But do you require it? Do you doubt the fact? I will not suppose it. Indeed, if you denied the Divine existence, I would not attempt to convince you by any formal reasoning. I have an impression, that reasoning on such a subject is a work of false expediency, questionable morality, and supererogation. Wherever the religious element exists in human nature, the idea of God is a living fact. If atheism exist, it exists not in the understanding, but in the heart; not in a conviction, but a wish, and, therefore, beyond the reach of logic. And where the religious element does not exist, where there is no *religiousness* of soul, or where if given it has been burnt out by passion, or destroyed in some other way—arguments for a God would be absolutely useless, for the want of an internal capacity to appreciate them. You cannot get an *idea* of God into any mind where the sentiment of religion is not imprinted on its constitution. The existence of God, then, we are authorised to assume—we are *bound* to assume. It is independent of all proof. It is written on the consciousness of human nature. Like the fact of our own being, it is too near—too evident—too much a matter of living self, for outward argument to have any force. Faith in God springs from within. It is based on those immutable sentiments of the soul that outlive all theories, and defy all scepticism. To deny it,

is to offer violence to all that is great and sacred in human nature.

Our subject also implies, a *capacity to turn to this religious object.* If you have no faculty to discern moral distinction, and to recognise the character and appreciate the claims of your Maker; if you have not what is designated a moral agency,—a power to determine according to the conclusions of the judgment, and the wishes of the heart,—our subject has no meaning, and religion has neither significance nor binding force. But you have this capacity of moral choice. We say *moral* choice, for all the sentient beings around you have a power of choice—a "free will." They choose what is agreeable and reject what is offensive to their nature. This is the very essence of liberty. Had you nothing but animal elements in your constitution, your faculty of choice would be like theirs—limited to the material sphere in which you are located. But you have other and higher elements of being. You have reason, conscience, and religious sentiment; your faculty of choice, therefore, has a higher function and a wider range. Truth, right, God, come within its sphere. You have to select, from the *material* and *spiritual* universe, elements suited to the appetites and wants of your complicated nature. You have to choose *now*, what will tell beneficially upon your history a million centuries to come. How great is your responsibility! How deliberative and serious should be your decisions! One mistake may ruin you. What was it but one error in human choosing that blighted, with a universal curse, the once fair prospects of our race?

But it may be said, Where is the proof of this capacity?

Admitting that originally it was a property of human nature, may it not have been lost, in the moral wreck that has befallen us? May it not be, that now man's spirit is an inert element in the plastic hands of circumstances, and that his character is rather made for him, than by him —more a bestowment than a self-production—a misfortune or a blessing, than a crime or a virtue? I answer, *no*—most emphatically, *no*. To assign all the many and mighty reasons for such a reply, would take us too far away from the path of thought which we have marked out for ourselves, and, therefore, I can only refer to a few of the great sources from which they are derived. There is the *Bible*. Assuming the divinity of this book, we have evidence the most varied, explicit, and conclusive. Its very existence implies this capacity in *fallen* man. We say in *fallen* man, for to the fallen man it is addressed. It comes to him with promises and threats, invitations and denunciations, for the very professed purpose of inducing him to "turn unto the Lord." But if he has not the power, can its existence have any meaning, or its appeals any binding force? There is no possibility of consistently holding the divinity of the Bible, and denying the freedom of the human will. Does not the denial of this capacity involve the denial of the justness of Biblical commands? And does not the denial of the justness of these commands involve the denial of the divinity of the Book?—for an unjust mandate must be undivine. There, again, is *Christian biography*. To this brief, but most sacred and precious page of human history, we would take the man who disbelieves the Bible, and bid him behold thoughtless *sensualists*, blaspheming sceptics, and reckless profligates,

renouncing their old principles, habits, and associations, and adopting, both in doctrine and practice, the spiritual religion of the Son of God. We would ask him, Do not these revelations indicate the potent workings of a mind still free to choose? Do you not see, in the memoirs of the good, the operations of an independent will—a will which, under the moral influence of God, has proved strong enough to burst the strongest shackles of sin, and form purposes of piety the most lofty and invincible? There is also *human consciousness.* This is the highest source of argument. You may set aside the sources of evidence previously mentioned, you may deny the divinity of the Bible, and you may put such a construction upon the facts of conversion as will destroy their worth as proofs; but, consciousness is an authority which no man disputes. Its facts are ultimate arguments. It is the highest tribunal in all controversy. Its judgment closes all debate. A sense of obligation to become religious, remorse for not being so, a self-approving sentiment where the religious life has been adopted—these are all facts of consciousness, and are they not proofs of a power to choose religion? Could there exist a sense of obligation where there is not a settled conviction of the power to obey? Could man ever feel—as he often does—a compunction for not being religious, if he felt that non-religion was the result of an absolute necessity? Impossible. The tear of penitence, the fallen countenance of remorse, the placid smile of self-approval —what are these but the deep consciousness of the human spirit, giving a visible utterance to the fact that man has a power to "choose the good part?"

Our subject moreover implies a sufficiency of reason to

move this capacity God-wards. There may be a religious object, there may exist in the human mind a capacity to turn to that object, and yet no decision take place, for the want of reasons in the form of motive to act upon that capacity. What we designate *instinct,* presides over the will of brutes; and because that instinct admits of little or no variation, their will is subject to no change. We see no change of purpose in the lower creation. Each tribe moves in the same precise train of choice as did its most distant ancestor. The human will, however, is under—or, at least, ever ought to be under—the directive force of reason; and reason, in its onward march of thought, is perpetually varying its views, and often its conclusions; and with this variation there is always a correspondent modification in the mind's resolves. From this it follows, that to move man's soul to the formation of a new purpose, you must unfold to his mind some new view. *New purposes in man must always be preceded by new reasons.* Several questions here present themselves in connexion with the philosophy of mind, which we must not even state, lest they should tempt us away from our practical aim. Assuming, then, that it is in general true, that our own choice or purpose is controlled by reasons, the question is, Are there any reasons adequate to the effecting of a religious purpose in man? There are. The Bible is a record of them—or, perhaps more correctly, a record of facts, statements, and circumstances, from which the mind can create them. *The Bible is a great moral argument.* It is God's argument. It is constructed by infinite wisdom, and enforced by infinite love. As a *divine* argument to induce this purpose, it should always be studied; as such,

too, it should be always expounded. Ah! this reminds me of the solemn magnitude of my work. How am I to employ this Bible with you? I deeply feel this question. Shall I indulge in declamation on its facts? Shall I sentimentalize on the experiences of its good men? Shall I draw poetic pictures of its more than poetic sceneries? I am not ignorant of the general—alas! that I should say general—acceptability of this. On the part of the hearer it requires no effort of mind. It pleases the imagination of the thoughtless. It gratifies a morbid love of excitement. It awakens ripples upon the surface of human feeling, which are as delightful to the unthinking man, as if an angel had gone down to his "Bethesda," "and troubled the waters" of his being. But all this, to a healthy and active intellect, would be insufferable, and if the Bible is an *argument*, would be out of keeping with its character, and a sad mistreatment of its contents. It is an argument. It has *premises*:—these premises are divine—these premises lie far down beneath its facts. To understand them they must be lifted from their hidden depths, and exhibited to moral minds in harmony with those everlasting laws of reason and right, which are imprinted on the constitution of souls. It has *conclusions*:—we must unfold their justness and enforce their obligation—thus "commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

Your judgment, I trust, has gone thus far with me. You have accepted the conclusions that have been propounded. You have granted the existence of a religious object, of a moral capacity to turn to that object, and a sufficiency of reason to give to that capacity the desired

direction. And now, reminding you that the religious object is the greatest Being in the universe, the religious capacity the chief glory of your nature, and the religious reasons the mightiest arguments of God—I ask, What subject, within the whole range of imagination, has such claims to your earnest attention as the one before us?

I must now call your attention to its MENTAL HISTORY. To mark the process of the mind, to trace the various stages through which it passes up to the point of decision, is, we conceive, the best way of getting a correct idea, both as to its nature and the method of attaining it. Here is an inspired history of the process.

"YEA, DOUBTLESS, AND I COUNT ALL THINGS BUT LOSS FOR THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST JESUS MY LORD: FOR WHOM I HAVE SUFFERED THE LOSS OF ALL THINGS, AND DO COUNT THEM BUT DUNG, THAT I MAY WIN CHRIST."

There are three stages;

I. *The reception of new knowledge.* "The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." What was the first step that the mind of Saul, the proud Hebrew, the bigoted Pharisee, and the sanguinary persecutor, took towards an enlightened consecration to God? Hear his experience. "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." The light of a new and divine idea "shone round about" his soul. He saw his Maker "in the face of Jesus Christ." Where the apostle's religion commenced,

the religion of all must begin—in a knowledge of God—in a knowledge of God derived through Christ. In commending this to your judgment, we submit the following remarks :—

That a new purpose requires new knowledge. An intelligent resolution is always based on an intelligent idea. Men's purposes change as their opinions change. In society the strongest determinations often fall on the entrance of new opinions. Decrees, held inviolable for ages, have been reversed by the advent of a new thought. Purposes change with ideas, as tides change with the moon. Ideas are the true reformers. In man's own soul, as well as in society, they are constantly pulling down and building up. Let no man despise a true idea. Arbitrary power grows pale, and falls dead before it. The decision that cannot be resolved into intelligible reasons, is unworthy of our nature. Physical impulse, superstitious passion, force of association, an obstinate hardihood of constitution—determinations that spring from such sources, are at once immoral and unmanly. Men should always "be able to give a reason" for the purpose as well as the "hope that is in them." It would be truly a healthy exercise to analyze the principles of every resolution we form, to ask the *wherefore* of every purpose, and to look at that *wherefore* in the light of eternal truth. This is how we should act—this is how we must act—if we would act as men.

That the new knowledge required must refer to the object of the new purpose. The mind can form no purpose in relation to any object of which it is ignorant. It is dead to all beyond the sphere of its knowledge. He who would

form a purpose in relation to business, literature, science, or any other pursuit, would naturally seek new light on such points. It must be so in religion. The religious purpose is to be obtained by the same mental process—no miracle is to be expected. A new purpose for God must be preceded by a new knowledge of Him. His character and claims must appear in an aspect unseen before. Religious decision, then, begins, not in blind feeling, but in mental light—"the light of the knowledge of the glory of God."

The new knowledge of the object should be suited to awaken interest in it. Suppose an individual sought to induce you to devote yourself to any pursuit, in relation to which you felt not only a great indifference, but a positive aversion. What would be the means which his common sense would dictate? Would it not be to present such a *specific* idea of the object, as would tend to awaken that interest and to remove both your indifference and dislike? A mere general idea he would feel to be unadapted. He would, therefore, seek to impart just that view of the object which would meet the antagonistic state of mind. *The mind will never decide for an object in which it feels no interest.* This is a well-known fact in its history. The first thing to be done, then, in inducing a purpose towards any course, is to receive such a knowledge of it as will awaken sympathy on its behalf. Now it is a fact—an ungainsayable fact—however it may be accounted for, that men are either entirely indifferent to the great object of religion, or, if they feel at all, the feeling partakes more of dread and dislike, than of affectionate concern. "The carnal mind is at enmity with God." There is not a page in human history that

does not furnish illustrations of this truth. How, then, is an interest in God to be awakened in a mind full of adverse feeling? From the very nature of its constitution, it must be through a knowledge of Him. But what knowledge? What is the particular *idea* of Him which is suited to effect the end? *This is the question.* And I would endeavour to answer it by proposing another. If there existed an individual towards whom you felt a deep and settled dislike, what would be the new view required respecting the object of your hatred, in order to change your feelings and awaken an interest on his behalf? I know only of one idea at all suited to the purpose; and that is, *an assurance of his love.* Let it be told—in such a way as would carry conviction to your inmost heart—that, however much you hated him, he loved you most truly and strongly, and was prepared to make any sacrifice for your good; and, with such a communication, would not your malignant feelings die, and your heart point with affection towards him from whom at one time it recoiled with repugnance? Now this is just the conviction which is requisite to inspire a depraved soul with an interest in God. "*He hath loved me.*" This is the converting idea, and the only converting idea of God. The guilty conscience clothes the Almighty with attributes of vengeance, from which it shrinks with horror; and, until a conviction of his *personal* love is worked into the soul, He will, instead of attracting its sympathies, repel them farther and farther for ever. But from whence is this idea to be obtained? I would not disparage nature as a revelation of my Maker. I know of no volume more sacred. Ever would I bow to its teachings with a reverent spirit, and a

grateful heart. It is written in characters of life. It is full of God. But it does not announce this idea, which is the great demand of my fallen nature. It tells me in ten thousand forms that God is good; but the goodness which it declares is common to all—nothing special to *me*. Since I have sinned, I want to know how the Infinite feels in relation to *me*. Before I can give Him my heart I must be assured that He loves me, though a sinner. I look in vain to the heavens above and to the earth beneath for such a disclosure. Whatever oracle in the material universe I interrogate, the response is, "It is not in me." Nature is a revelation to the innocent, not to the guilty; it was written before the fall. It has no communication from God to *apostate* man. Now this idea, the essential condition to the formation of a religious purpose, it is the great design of *Christianity* to unfold. The Gospel is the expression of God's love to *me*. Here I see him bowing the heavens and coming down. He is in my nature. He reasons with my reason. He talks in my language. He mingles with my race. His every word is the utterance of love. His every act is the embodiment of love. His wondrous death is an outburst of love—all-subduing.

Now if a new purpose requires new knowledge; if new knowledge must refer to the object towards which the purpose is to be directed; if the knowledge of that object must be such as to awaken an interest in the mind on its behalf; and if the idea necessary to awaken an interest in the depraved mind in relation to God, can only be derived from Christianity, it follows, that it is no arbitrary arrangement which requires a man to "search the Scriptures for eternal life." Manly decision must begin, as a matter of

necessity, with a knowledge of God as *revealed in Jesus.* Well might the apostle, therefore, glory in "this excellent knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." My young brother, do you aspire to spiritual excellence? Would you have the wonderful powers of your immortal nature quickened —drawn out—invigorated—directed to the sublimest ends? Do you hope to avoid the tremendous fate of the lost, and rise to true greatness and true bliss? If so, remember that you cannot dispense with the Gospel. Nothing will answer its purpose. In it, and nowhere else, dwells the *converting idea*—God's love to *apostate man.*

II. *The experience of new attachments.* This is the second stage of the process; and this is suggested by the expression, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."

Man is the creature of attachments. We can conceive of a being entirely destitute of any emotional element—a being of frigid intellect—a creature having a power to observe and classify the phenomena of the universe, and to reduce the whole to its few great absolute and rudimental principles, and yet having no susceptibility of feeling. To such a creature beauty would have no attractions, music no charms, hell no terrors, heaven nothing to love. Such, however, is not our case. We have hearts as well as understandings. As the ivy twins round the oak, so the affections of our nature gather about the various objects of life. Ah! how these hearts attach us to the things of earth!

Man's attachments determine his purposes. The objects we love rule us. We strive most anxiously for the things most dear to our heart. Our volitions are but the expressions and effects of our likes and dislikes. He who thoroughly

knew the laws of our being, recognised this truth, when He said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." The apostle had the same idea when he enjoined the Colossians to "set their affections upon things above." As soon may the waters roll up the mountain, as the mind direct its purposes contrary to the current of its affections.

Man's first attachments are generally incompatible with religious decision. What are the first objects of our attachment? Spiritual truth—moral goodness—God? Alas! no. Carnal pleasure, wealth, fame, business—these are the objects that engross our hearts. These loved, are inimical to religion. They draw the mind in an adverse direction, The man whose affections are fixed on these will never move God-wards. These attachments are the unseen powers that prevent decision. The mariner hoists his sails, there is a strong breeze in his favour, and the tides flow auspiciously, but the vessel moves not. She is stationary. There is some unseen power resisting these forces. It is the anchor down in the hidden sands; and that anchor must be uplifted before any progress can be made. It is so with man in relation to religion. All outward events may urge him to piety; but his attachment to unworthy objects holds his mind, and renders futile every effort for his salvation. From all this it follows, that new attachments are essential to religious decision. Love for truth, holiness, and God must be awakened. This new affection must be strong enough to expel every other—great enough to fill and rule the soul. Now this experience of new attachments, which is the second stage in the process, naturally follows the first. They rise out of the new knowledge. Our emotions are under the sway of our

ideas. The alteration of an opinion in relation to an individual has often transmuted love into hate—and the reverse. One thought has often made the heart relax its hold upon an object which it once held most dear. Let the great idea of God's love penetrate the spiritual nature, and take a full possession of the soul, and what a revolution will it work within! It will break up the deepest fountains of the heart. *Contrition—adoring gratitude—admiring love*, and *earnest benevolence*—these would spring up forthwith—dissolve for ever the soul's connection with every sinful object—turn the whole current of feeling in a reverse direction, and give it an onward impulse whose force shall accelerate with ages. It was thus with the apostle. His attachments underwent a most thorough change. In the context he gives a specimen of the objects of his once devoted love. His *birth* :—He was of the stock of Israel—a Jew, not by proselytism, but lineage—a descendant, too, not of the revolting tribes, but of Benjamin—a tribe which retained its allegiance to Heaven, peopled the holy city, and lived next door to the temple. *His privileges* :—He was "circumcised the eighth day," according to the very letter of the law. He was a "Hebrew of the Hebrews"—thoroughly instructed in rabbinical literature. "Of the straitest sect a Pharisee." His *zeal* :—His religion was not a cold idea—it was a burning sentiment. With intense earnestness he fought its battles—"concerning zeal, persecuting the church." These ideas of a noble descent, distinguished privileges, and religious ardour, were once precious to him. His affections clustered around them as the chief good. But the idea of God in Christ entered his soul, and *what a change*! Under its creative influence these

objects passed away like the mist of morning before the noon-tide sun, leaving a spiritual scenery around his being, whose beauty and sublimity filled him with wonder and love. "Old things passed away, and all things became new; what things were gain to me," &c., &c.

III. *The adoption of a new life.* "That I may win Christ." This is the third stage, and it follows the other two. A new knowledge is given to the understanding. This produces new attachments in the heart, and these give a new direction to the will. The first stage is the action of the intellect; the second, the action of the affections; and the third, the action of the will: and the action of the will is the action of the man. The volition is the expression of the whole man, and the whole man, in religious decision, is directed to a *definite end*, and to a *definite end with all the earnestness of his nature.* This is suggested by the expression, "that I may win Christ."

Here is *a definite end:—"Christ."* It is not in any material sense that the apostle used the word Christ. The Christ of Paul was not the "flesh and blood," but the *life* and *spirit*—the divine goodness of which He was the incarnation, representative, and teacher. *Christ* was the apostolic word to express universal excellence. To win Christ, is to obtain the blessings of his atonement, the absolution of sin, reconciliation to God, and a peace of mind that passeth all understanding. To win Christ, is to gain his lovely character, participate in his spirit, and be ruled by his principles. To win Christ, is to obtain his favour, enjoy his benignant smiles, and have his "well done" sounding ever in the chambers of our being. To win *Christ, is to enjoy* his fellowship—to feel a kindred spirit

—to mingle our thoughts and emotions with his—to feel the bosom pulsate with the lofty aspirations of his soul, and to sit down upon the moral throne of noble principle with Him.

This definite end is *pursued with supreme earnestness.* See the racer on the Grecian course! His eye is fixed upon *one* object—the goal. He is dead to every other. This fires and fills his soul with an impulsive passion, which closes up the senses, and braces up the faculties to the highest point of strength. This is the apostle's allusion. What the goal was to the racer, *Christ*, or goodness, was to him. It was the *one thing*. This, my young brethren, is *manly decision.* This is the moral attitude which we wish you to assume forthwith. *A determined, earnest, persevering progress in excellence, is the highest destiny of our nature.*

LECTURE III.

THE MORAL HINDRANCE TO MANLY DECISION.

A condensed view of real religion. The case of Felix illustrates the obstacle. 1. It was not natural inability. 2 It was not Divine sovereignty. 3. It was not intellectual difficulty. It was *perverse attachment* - love of darkness. Two general remarks concerning this *corrupt feeling*—the great hindrance to religion. I. It cannot exclude moral conviction. II. It does compromise moral conviction. Such a compromise involves—presumption, delusion, and guilt.

THE MORAL HINDRANCE TO MANLY DECISION.

WE are not discussing some dry technicality, conventional prejudice, dreamy speculation, or mystic dogma in human creeds; but a definite, intelligible, and stupendous reality—not a theory, or an art, but a *life*, something superior to all opinions, sects, and institutions—not a supplement to other excellencies of character, but the substratum of all, the *substance* in which all the qualities of goodness inhere—not a mysterious something transplanted on human nature, but human nature *itself*, acting in obedience to the laws of its constitution—laws revived and re-enforced by the "Holy One" through the Gospel. The thing of which we speak—*religion*, is either *everything* to a man, or *nothing*. Is it, as we have stated, the *supreme purpose* of the soul? If so, wherever it exists, all the faculties and energies of being will work religiously, everywhere and at all times—in the market as well as in the temple—on each of the six days as well as on the first;—for the sun is not more regularly followed by planetary orbs, as he wheels along his immeasurable and effulgent circuit, than is the master determination of man followed by all the affections and powers of his nature. But where

it is not the dominant principle, it is *nothing;* its formulas, professions, solemnities are shadows without a substance —empty clouds, that the stormy winds of heaven will one day scatter into thinnest air. Take your ideas of religion, I entreat you, not from the hydra and distorted phases which it assumes in the history of its professors, but from the philosophy of your nature, the word of God, and, above all, the life of Jesus. On this the question of questions, "His life was the light of men." In that light it appears as the sublimest reality. It is a thing of moral symmetry and heavenly inspiration—it is "full of grace and truth" —it has a grandeur to awe, a beauty to captivate, and a power to transform.

But I need not enlarge on the importance of religion. It is by no means a difficult task to make men both feel and acknowledge that it is a thing of transcendent moment. It seems to me that all men, whatever be their principles or practices, are predisposed to such an impression. No reasoning appears necessary to convince them, that it is the "one thing needful." You have their inner and spontaneous *yes* to every statement you make touching its magnitude. Thus far the hearer and preacher—the man and the Bible—are one. Yet how few comparatively are religious! Why is this? There must be some great obstruction to the adoption of a religious life—otherwise, with such wide-spread impressions of its importance, human souls would go forth in devout sympathies to God, free as the mountain streams flow along the sloping hills. What is this *great general hindrance?* This is the question I now propose to your consideration. The case of Felix suggests *the solution.*

"FELIX TREMBLED, AND ANSWERED, GO THY WAY FOR THIS TIME, AND WHEN I HAVE A CONVENIENT SEASON, I WILL CALL FOR THEE."

Moral truth came to Felix in an argument, well constructed, surpassingly solemn and all-convincing; wielded by an individual of extraordinary genius, great erudition, divinely inspired. The result was a deep moral impression. He "trembled." The scene is magnificent. "Turn aside and see this great sight." See the man, enthroned in power, robed in royalty, and surrounded with brave Romans as his guard, trembling at the reasoning of the friendless prisoner who stands before him, charged with the foulest crimes, clothed with the anathemas of his countrymen, and awaiting a violent death from their hands. The judge is all terror. But calm, benign, independent, is the bearing of the prisoner. There is a moral majesty on his brow. God speaks in the scene, clear and solemn, as He spoke of old, from the burning bush of Midian. He tells you wherein *true greatness* consists. It is not in worldly wealth—not in outward pomp—not in royal power; but in *truth*. Truth lifts the poorest of her sons above the most depressing influences of time, and invests them with a power superior to thrones. What, in reality, was Felix the judge to Paul the prisoner? An infant in the grasp of a giant—a crouching serf in the presence of a sovereign who made his inner spirit cower at his word. There are electric elements slumbering in the bosom of the good man, however poor, whose peals and flashes can make the guilty in the highest places tremble.

Now, you observe, Felix did but tremble. He was *convinced* but not *converted*. His conscience was startled into

a momentary life. He was stung by its reproofs. He was alarmed with its horrible picturings of "the judgment to come." But this was all. No sinful attachments were renounced—no purpose of a new life was formed. He halted at the first stage. With such a deep impression of the importance of religion, what prevented him from adopting it forthwith? His case suggests the following reply, which I conceive to be of general application.

It was not natural inability. Does this Felix appear in pitiable helplessness? In his resistance does he not show a giant energy of soul? His strength of will rose superior to the most cogent reasonings of an inspired man. Successfully he thwarts the design of the Divine force which now assailed his being. That representation of the sinner which divests him of all *natural* power is, I believe, most false and injurious. Has he not a power to resist all outward forces—to defy any instrumentality to coerce him to obedience—to hold fast to his old moral position, despite of the strongest appeals? Yes, he has a power to say NO, to that God at whose bidding the universe arose, and in obedience to whose voice all the systems of immensity revolve without a pause. This power is the gift of God. It is the noblest faculty of our nature. It is that which connects us with moral government—which makes us men. The Almighty, in all his appeals to us, never violates it—always recognises and respects it. He seeks "to make us willing," and when his appeals are unsuccessful, we have the explanation in the extraordinary statement, "How often *would* I . . . . and *ye would* not." *Natural inability* is no hindrance to a religious life; were it so, the possession of religion would be no virtue, and the want of it

no crime. Is it not preposterous for a man who, like Felix, has a power to "resist the Spirit of God," to say that he has no power to yield to his influence? Has the man, who has sufficient energy to stand up against the Divine moral forces of nature and the Gospel—to repel the "powers of the world to come,"—no power to submit to their benign tendency and sway? There is no plea for non-religion more false and fatal than the *cannot*. The man who believes in his natural incapacity, must regard the "Just One" as "reaping where he has not strawed." With such an idea, is he ever likely to become religious? Is not faith in the capacity essential to faith in the obligation? And is not faith in the obligation the very first step to a religious life?

It was not Divine sovereignty. The apostle was an inspired man. As such, his teaching must be regarded as an utterance of the *Divine will.* His reasonings were the pleadings of God. He was "in Christ's stead." Divine sovereignty, therefore, was not against, but for, the conversion of Felix. It was its manifest expression that he should adopt a new course of life. It strove, through the apostle, its appointed organ, to induce him "to repent and believe the Gospel." There have been—alas! there are men, who trace non-conversion up to some mysterious decree of Almighty God. According to them the solution of all the problems of human impenitence is to be found, not in the moral agency of the creature, but in the sovereign purpose of the Creator—in some mystic and immutable plan, far back in the fathomless eternity. Perish these unscriptural and blasphemous ideas! They are the miserable dreams of a barbarous theology. They find no record on

the bright book of God. Here, in this revelation of paternal love, we learn, that, instead of sovereignty forming a single hindrance, it is its prerogative—its delight—to remove whatever obstructions exist. It levels the mountains which our sins had formed, and makes clear and straight the path to God.* All *external* hindrances it has removed by the atonement of Jesus, and all the *internal* ones it is ever striving to remove, by the agency of Providence, the ministry of the Gospel, and the workings of the Spirit. Take God's own word as the assurance that there is no impediment to your salvation in his eternal plans. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance. "God so loved the world, that *whosoever* believeth on him," &c. "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, *but that the world through him might be saved.*" God is in Christ reconciling *the world* unto himself. "*Who will have all men to be saved,* and come to a knowledge of the truth." Blessed God! we feel, that wherever the hindrance is, it is not with Thee. If we, in our folly, have ever thought so, pardon our wickedness and correct our error!

It was not intellectual difficulty. Felix had not intellectual difficulties, for his judgment was convinced—overcome by the reasoning of the apostle. His convictions now were decidedly in favour of religion. If a man's convictions are against religion, his irreligion has something of sincerity and manliness about it; but such a case, I imagine, is not to be found. There are thousands, it may be, who

* *Read Rev. Dr.* Payne's "Lectures on Divine Sovereignty."

have no convictions at all on the subject; but I cannot believe that there is a solitary individual to be found whose convictions are actually against it; they may be against some of the forms which it assumes—its caricatures—but not against its spirit and its essence. Has there lived a man, think you, who has had the conviction that it was right to be irreligious—that it was wrong to love excellence—to venerate greatness—to praise goodness, and to worship God? I believe not. But if a man's convictions are not against religion, I see not how intellectual difficulties can be justly regarded as the cause of his impiety. I am well aware that they are frequently so regarded. Ask men why they are not religious, and if they venture a reason at all, the probability is, that they will refer to some difficulties of the Bible, which they say, necessarily prevent them from receiving it as the "word of God." *The introduction of moral evil: the trinity of the Godhead: eternal predestination: the Divinity of Jesus:* these, and such points as these, are mentioned as the moral causes of their scepticism. We are challenged to reconcile the first with the moral purity of the divine character; the second, with indivisible and absolute *unity* of being; the third, with the free agency and personal responsibility of man; and the fourth, with the sufferings, the infirmities, and the weepful supplication of the despised Nazarene? That such are difficulties I dispute not—I readily grant—I deeply feel. They rise before us like some huge rocks, whose foundations are hidden in the fathomless deep below, whose lofty peaks are enfolded in impenetrable clouds above. They bound our horizon. We cannot reach down to their bases, we cannot ascend their awful heights, we have no line to gauge

their dimensions. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." But whilst we admit, in full, the greatness of these Biblical difficulties, we cannot concede that they are the hindrances to a religious life. Where they are *sincerely* felt, we think that but a little fair reasoning would suffice to remove them—would render them conducive rather than obstructive. As *objections*, can they stand before the arguments of Grotius or Littleton, Fuller or Watson, Paley or Butler? No; the reasonings of these men would scatter them from the mind of every *honest* reader, as the vapoury mists are scattered from the lovely hill by the stirring breeze of a sun out-shining in his strength. We consider even the following thoughts sufficient to obviate all that may be felt obstructive to religion, in connection with such difficulties.

Intellectual difficulties are in themselves no evidence against the truth of the subject to which they refer. In the facts of nature, and occurrences of human history, there are subjects associated with insuperable difficulties, the truth of which we never think of questioning, and which it would be esteemed madness to deny. For an illustration of this, let me recommend you to peruse "Butler's Analogy of Religion;" a work which, for profundity of thought, accuracy of reasoning, greatness of aim, and suggestive and disciplining influence, has no rival, and but few equals. Besides, were we to deny the truth of a subject on the mere ground of its difficulty, we, creatures of limited but progressive faculties, should be involving ourselves, every day, in most ridiculous absurdities. We should be rejecting as false one day what we should proclaim as truth the next. The fact is, *difficulty* is a *relative* thing. The subject that is difficult to

one mind is mere rudiment to another. The A B C of Newton are inscrutable enigmas to the mass, and that which stretched beyond the grasp of the great astronomer, may be the simplest elements in the knowledge of an angel. What is mystery to an angel is alphabet to God. Yes, and even to the same mind, subjects once most difficult become most plain. That which overtasked our energies at school is too easy for effort now. Interminable ages of progression are before us. The present intellectual mountains will dwindle into particles as we advance—particles of light, streaming a radiance on our future steps. Again—

Intellectual difficulties, in relation to Biblical revelation, are what we might have expected. There stands the student of nature, perplexed by every sentence on the page he reads. Has he walked the fields of botany and culled the flowers and the plants? Still, he cannot tell how springs the little seed from the earth, and how it covers hill and dale, mead and forest, with such a vast profusion and endless variety of life. Has he studied the stars of God, as they have swept along, in silent splendour, through the dome of night? Still he understands not the "ordinances of heaven." Has he surveyed the exquisite and complicated machinery of his own frame? Overwhelmed with astonishment, he must confess, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Let him be a Humboldt in the sciences, yet everywhere will he hear the *great spirit* of nature reproving his ignorance, and challenging his puny intellect to interpret fully her mystic page. "Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare if thou knowest it all. Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof; that thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof, and that thou

shouldest know the paths to the house thereof? Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born? or because the number of thy days is great? Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war? By what way is the light parted which scattereth the east wind upon the earth? Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder; to cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man; to satisfy the desolate and waste ground, and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth? Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew? Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it? The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen." Go to that perplexed disciple of nature with the Bible—tell him that it is a book written by the author of the system he has been studying. Satisfy him as to its divinity; and then, I ask, How would he be likely to receive it from your hands? Would he do it with a thoughtless spirit? With what ideas would he open its pages? Would he expect to master everything it contained? Nay, would not an awful solemnity pervade his being at that moment; and would he not commence its perusal, fully anticipating to meet in its every section things that would baffle his thoughts and outstrip his comprehension? We think so. And if that man, in the progress of the perusal, met with no difficulties, methinks his scepticism would be awakened, and he would renounce it as an imposture. Further—

Intellectual difficulties in Biblical revelation accord with its

professed design. What is the avowed object of the Bible? Is it not mental and spiritual culture—the training of the intellect and heart—"the teaching of every man?" If so, Is not difficulty essential? The school-book, whose difficulties the pupil has mastered, has lost its educational worth. It has no longer a challenge to his faculties. Its suggestive force has been exhausted. If the Bible is always to be in our world as its teacher, must it not always have a something in it that man does not understand? Tell me of a period, when humanity in its progressive march shall have mastered every difficulty in the Bible, and you will tell me of a period when the Bible shall cease to be the teaching book of the race. Intellect, in that Colossean age, will treat it as a vesture which it has out-grown. Still more :—Its difficulties are as necessary for the training of the heart as the understanding, They make us sensible of our feebleness. They humble our proud spirits. They inspire us with stirring questions. They fill us with devout amazement and solemn awe. They appear to me somewhat analogous to the stupendous highlands and the deep glens, the yawning chasms and the circuitous rivers, the craggy rocks and the dashing seas, of a highly picturesque and romantic territory; there is an air of grandeur—a *living spirit* of sublimity pervading the whole, which starts in the bosom of the spectator inspirations he could never feel, amidst the tame and monotonous in nature. Would I have all this removed from the Bible? Would I level its Alpine heights? Would I fill up its awful deeps? Would I make straight its labyrinthian rivers, and turn its shoreless oceans into lakes? No. It is when I look up at those dizzy altitudes, which I cannot climb, down upon those abysses, which I have no plummet

to sound, abroad on those oceans, through whose surges no human bark has ever steered its course, that I catch the apostolic inspiration, "Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

I think that these general remarks on intellectual difficulties are sufficient to show that they are not the real hindrances to a religious life. They are apologies for non-religion, but not *reasons*—excuses, not causes. The real reasons are to be found deeper in human nature. They are such as man would blush to utter as reasons—such as he would not put on paper. The argument for infidelity is essentially superficial and false. It does not go down to first principles. What is the real hindrance? If it be not natural inability, Divine sovereignty, or intellectual difficulty, What is it? I answer, *perverse attachment.* The whole may be traced to this one principle. Love, in some form or other, is the mainspring of our actions. It is the fountain in the heart, from which "are the issues of life." Even intellect is the servant of a man's love. It is ever ready to do its work. At its bidding it will even draw the sword against heaven. It will disfigure truth, and mould error into beauty, to gratify the heart. Jesus and his apostles traced infidelity to this source. "Men love darkness"—this is Christ's philosophy of non-religion. He does not, you observe, refer it to *simple love*—for the principle of love is natural and right—but to love in relation to a certain object, *darkness.*

Sinful love is the love of wrong objects. I need not specify the objects the love of which becomes an impediment to *man's salvation.* The apostle John seems to have gene-

ralized them into three. "The lust of the flesh"—things connected with the senses—all that pampers the appetites and gratifies animal propensities. "The lust of the eyes" —outward gaiety and show. "The pride of life"—all that promotes ambition, wealth, splendour, power, influence, and self-aggrandizement. Herein, my young brethren, is the obstruction. Mark, it is found, not in the region of conviction, but of feeling, not in principle, but passion, not in the dictates of an enlightened mind, but in the impulses of a corrupt heart. Not in the higher and immortal part of your nature, but in the low animalism of a corruptible organization. It is for you to determine whether irreligion, springing as it does from such a source, is worthy of your nature or not—worthy of that soul of yours, which shall outlive the stars, and yet be young —comprehend the universe, and yet be empty without a God.

There are two facts suggested by the case of Felix, which illustrate the immense evil of this *corrupt feeling*, which is the grand hindrance to religion.

I. *It cannot exclude moral conviction.* "He trembled." The knowledge we possess of his history warrants the conclusion that he was a man of the most depraved affections. In his official character he appears to have been controlled, not by justice or humanity, but by avarice, ambition, and revenge. Under his government the lives, liberties, and possessions of his subjects were most wantonly sacrificed. Tacitus informs us that he exercised royal authority with the spirit of a slave, and indulged himself in every species of cruelty and lust. In his domestic relations his conduct was marked by villany and licentiousness. Drusilla, with

whom he was now living, was the wife of another. The rights and happiness of a husband, the vows and virtues of a wife, the proprieties of society and the institutions of nature—these awful sanctities he trampled beneath his feet. Now observe, notwithstanding all this perverse attachment, he was not *proof* against conviction. His sensuality could not defend him from the assailment of truth. Its barbed arrow pierced, through all, into his moral heart. Heaven still had its access to the conscience. Above the din and tumult of his passions, rose in thunders the voice of law. Now, we wish you to observe, as a general truth, that *corrupt feeling*—the great impediment to a religious life—*cannot exclude* moral conviction from the conscience. It may—alas! it does—obscure its vision, deaden its sensibilities, and render its voice for a while inarticulate. But it cannot kill it; it cannot prevent it upstarting to agony at the bidding of God. Do I mourn over this fact in our nature? Do I mention it as being, either in itself, or in its intention, an evil? By no means. I regard this susceptibility, which the conscience retains amidst the lowest carnalism, as a fact which gives a *possibility*, at any rate, to the salvation of the most depraved while on earth. But I do consider it as a *tremendous* evil in the history of those who are *destined* to "live after the flesh." This *thing* which hinders you from adopting religion is strong enough to hold you from duty, but it is *too weak* to shelter you from conviction. If it could wear away the sensibilities of the man who is to live under its influence—enfold his conscience in an atmosphere too dense for moral light to pass through, close up every avenue to his inner spirit, absorb entirely the moral soul into its own sensual element, then, great as

would be the evil involved—great, even to the positive loss of his humanity, yet it would be a blessing to him compared with those agonies of conscience from which it cannot deliver. Oh those agonies! It is "the worm that dieth not, the fire that is not quenched!" It is the horror of all horrors, it is the hell of all hells, it is the scathing lightnings and the terrific thunderings of the damned! Cain, Belshazzar, Judas,—these self-tortured spirits of distant centuries, cry out to us, "A wounded spirit who can bear!" "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of *thine heart*, and in the sight of thine eyes; *but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*" Yes, from the lowest region of corrupt feeling, God will bring thee into judgment. Conscience shall hear his voice, and rise from its sensual grave—start into the scorching blaze of eternal truth. It may be, my brother, that thy conscience now is quiet. But is it not the quiet of nature before a storm? There is no healthful blue in the over-arching sky. No salubrious breeze stirring around. Life droops in the murky, stagnant, air. What means this serenity? It is the nursing of the elements into fury. It is terribly ominous. The very silence is a divine prophet, proclaiming—"Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire." The other fact which shows the evil of this corrupt feeling is:—

II. *It does compromise moral conviction.* "Go thy way." Moral conviction is the voice of conscience, and the voice of conscience always speaks about duty. Feeling, speaks

about gratification; *judgment*, about utility; *conscience*, ever about right. Law, retribution, and God are its themes. In theory every man holds that this conscience should be the reigning power in human nature, that it should sit enthroned above every faculty and every affection, rule the heaving tide of passion, and control the complicated machinery of thought. To move without her voice is brutal; to move against it, is devilish; to move with it, is alone worthy of intelligent natures. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." We might justly infer, that the voice of conscience to Felix was, "repent and believe the Gospel." This was now her imperative demand. But how did he meet it? Did he utter an emphatic *No?* Did he say, "I will never obey thy behests, I will never become religious?" No. He *compromised* the matter—he promised to obey some future time. "When I have a convenient season I will send for thee."

Now, it seems to me that this is the way in which the *corrupt feeling* ever treats an awakened conscience. It proposes a *compromise.* Like a dishonest debtor, it puts off the just demands of the creditor, not by a discharge of the claim, not by a positive refusal to do so, but by a series of promises never to be fulfilled. Indeed, I know not of any other way in which it could succeed. Has any man the courage to utter a *positive* refusal to the demands of conscience? There are but few men, if any, whatever their beliefs or non-beliefs, who, when conscience is speaking, would *dare* look up to heaven and say, "I will never do the right; I will never bow my knee to the Infinite; I will go down to my grave and up to the judgment regardless of duty, setting *its mandates* at defiance." Is not sin necessary cowardice?

Does not the stoutest heart ever "tremble before the silent monitor?" "The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth." But supposing that he had the courage to do so, would not the *very attempt* frustrate his aim? If the man who is constantly putting off religion by promises were to bring his mind to the crisis of an emphatic denial, and resolutely thus to speak—"Well! I am determined *never* to think of religion any more—to brave the righteous allotments of my boundless future—his desperate attempt would, I think, so horrify his conscience, as to impel him to an instant surrender to the inner sense of right.

Several evils are here developed in connection with this compromise of conscience. There is *presumption*. Had the great Author of our existence assured us that we should live a certain period, and specified to us the exact number of days that we should sojourn in this disciplinary state, there would be something like reason in proposing for the future. But no such assurance is given. "Our times are in his hand. Reason, observation, history, the Bible—all emphatically teach "that no man hath power over his spirit to retain it." "Our breath is in our nostrils." In every out-breathing we die, and thus we oscillate each moment between life and death, the culturing circumstances of time, and the unalterable retributions of Eternity. What wanton presumption is it, therefore, for us to make promises about more "convenient seasons." "Go to now, ye that say, To-day, or to-morrow, we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

There is also *delusion* in this compromise. On the supposition that the very day which the man had appointed for adopting religious life would dawn upon him, "a prisoner of hope," What reason is there to believe that he would find that period a more "convenient season?" None whatever; every reason to the contrary. Will the force of evil habits decrease by practice? Will the moral sensibilities grow more sensitive by the constant obliteration of impressions? Has corrupt feeling a tendency to clear the spiritual vision? Will protracted carnality facilitate the choice of holiness? A reply is superfluous. Religious seasons become more *in*-convenient every hour, in the history of the irreligious man. Never were your obstacles so powerful as they are now,—never again, so long as you pursue an undecided course, will they be so feeble. Every day, you are weaving new strings into that cord which binds your spirit to evil; every day, adding momentum to the forces that bear you away from virtue and from God. How awfully fallacious is the reasoning of a corrupt heart! Still more. There is *impiety*. Suppose that you have many years yet in the future to live, and that in those years there will come a "more convenient season,"—in such a case, would procrastination be justifiable? No. For, as being, and all the blessings of being, were given to be devoted to God, would not every moment of delay be the contracting of guilt, the augmenting of responsibility, and the "treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath?"

The great hindrance, then, is not natural inability, not Divine sovereignty, not intellectual difficulties. It is *corrupt feeling*—a thing which, whilst it is too weak to

exclude moral conviction, is strong enough to induce such a compromise of the higher nature as is fraught with *presumption*, *delusion*, and *impiety*. Its weakness for the one thing, and its strength for the other, constitute alike a mighty argument why you should at once deliver yourself from its influence. Rise above this base element. Crush this Upas in the seed. Awake to reason. Enthrone conscience. Be religious; and in every advancing step you will find the gratification of desire, the development of power, the rise of soul, and the widening and brightening of being.

LECTURE IV.

THE GREAT ARGUMENT FOR MANLY DECISION.

The influence of corrupt feeling upon the whole history of man. Three deductions from the preceding lecture. 1. The necessity for moral reformation. 2. The fitness of Christianity to its end. 3. The moral agency of God. Divine influence something more than the *Book-spirit.* What is *the* argument for religion? 1. Not that it is in harmony with the religion of one's country. 2. Not that it has been recommended by great names. 3. Not that it confers great blessings on society. 4. Not that it bestows the highest conceivable good upon our being. *Moral obligation* is the argument. Because there is a God, religion is binding. This argued from three considerations:—I. From the relation of his being to our being. II. From the relation of his will to our constitution. III. From the relation of his service to our happiness.

THE GREAT ARGUMENT FOR MANLY DECISION.

WE have already traced the great impediment to religious decision to *corrupt feeling*. We have seen that the affections of the soul twine themselves around wrong objects, that the heart centres itself in the material rather than the spiritual, in the expediences of time rather than the everlasting principles of right, the creature rather than the Creator. The Scriptural terms, which describe this state of the heart, are various and significant. *Flesh, lusts, old man, motions of sin, law in the members*—such are its designations. The affections are the mainsprings in human nature, hence in philosophy they are characterized as the "active powers." They are, in the machinery of mind, what the "living creatures" were in the symbolic "wheels" of the old Seer; when they move, all the mental wheels move; when they stand, all the mental wheels stand; and when they are lifted up, all the mental wheels are lifted up and roll heavenwards. Corrupt feeling, then, is no feeble antagonist to religion. It is a law ever warring against the law of the mind. He who has made a stand for virtue, and striven hard for spiritual goodness, knows well its hostile force. He has

had to battle it in its strongholds. He understands experimentally the full meaning of that deep cry of the soul —a cry for spiritual help—"Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Let us proceed briefly to consider a few of the general truths, which are fairly deducible from the fact that *feeling* is the great obstacle to religious decision.

The necessity for moral reformation. A very slight knowledge of the human mind will supply sufficient evidence to establish the fact that it was not the intention of our Maker that *feeling* should ever be the ascendant element within us. Were it always pure, and did it always flow in a right direction, government should not be entrusted to it. It should never be a regal principle. Its province is to propel, and not pilot the spiritual bark. Moral reason should ever stand firm at the helm. It should sound the depths below, eye the uplands far away, and guide every movement by the bright pole-star of everlasting law. But if it would be wrong for feeling, when pure, to rule, how much more so when corrupt! If it would be wrong, when it moves consonant with the dictates of conscience, how much more so when it clashes with all the moral sentiments of the soul, and strikes against the strongest convictions of duty? This is the state of unconverted souls. Is it not a state of fearful guilt? Is it not a state, too, necessarily incompatible with the real interests of man? Who has ever known an individual or a nation rise by allowing feeling to control the conviction? Does not all history show that passion, uncontrolled by principle, has ever been the greatest bane to the race? It has blighted the prospects and sapped the foundations of empires. As its tide has swollen, the rights of man

have ever disappeared, like the pebbles on the shore amidst the advancing waves. Every increase of power to such feeling is a positive decrease in the real power of man. Just as passion has risen over principle the *man* has ever sunk—sunk brutewards—yes, and hellwards too. Moral principle is the only elevating force. Material civilization depends upon the application of new physical principles to practical uses. And moral civilization—the *true* civilization of man depends upon the application of *moral conviction* to the formation of character and the duties of life. But to this, corrupt feeling is directly opposed. Hence, the voice of reason and experience echo the language of Jesus—"Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh"—a creature of carnal feeling; "and that which is born of the Spirit is *spirit*." His spirit has been resuscitated, it has been raised from its sensual grave, it has risen to a mastery over animal instincts and depraved affections. He is *spirit*—full of life—full of noble thought—full of generous sentiment—full of devout aspirations—full of lofty aims—full of God, "who quickeneth all things." Another truth which appears from this fact is:—

The fitness of Christianity to its end. Let us suppose ourselves to be asked the question, What instrumentality is necessary in order to subjugate corrupt feeling to the conviction of an enlightened conscience? I think that we should all agree in regarding two things as indispensable. Something to *convince* and something to *persuade*—evidence and motive, argument and suasion. Without conviction, there would not then be the slightest movement towards a change. The whole soul would remain passive under the undisturbed

ascendancy of depraved affection. But conviction of itself would not suffice. Felix was convinced. There must, therefore, with that conviction be an appeal to the heart, to its hope and fear, gratitude and love, in order to prompt a movement according to the dictates of the moral faculty. Now, just what we should have thought requisite, the Divine method possesses. It has the twofold element, the one to wake the conscience, and the other to attract the affections. It has grace and truth—law and Gospel—a Sinai to flash conviction and a Calvary to enkindle love. Who will say that the precise aptitude of this system to the high and gracious end which it proposes is not a potent evidence for its divinity, and a mighty reason why we should recommend it with earnestness to our race? The fact shows, moreover:—

The moral agency of God. The conviction produced in the mind of Felix I refer to the Spirit of God. Jesus taught that this was emphatically his work. "When he is come he shall convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." It is sometimes said, in opposition to the doctrine of the Spirit's agency, that a man wants nothing but sufficient evidence, and the free use of his own faculties, to believe. This is readily admitted in relation to every system of truth but the moral system of revelation. But why should we make this an exception?

Do we find any particular circumstances, antagonistic to faith, identified with it, which are not found in connection with other departments of truth? If there are none, the exception is not allowable; but if there are, right reason justifies us in taking it. Such circumstances exist. There is *moral habit.* The habits which most persons contract

before this system comes fairly under their attention are such as the whole tenour of its truths condemn; their habits become their ruling principles, and when assailed they marshal every power of the soul to their defence. There is *fear*. The man in business, who feels that the current of events is hastening him to insolvency, frequently developes a great reluctance to examine his accounts. In all the world there is no book to him so fearful as that ledger. It is repulsive to him, for too well he knows that it will confirm what his foreboding heart suspects, and what he is afraid to look in the face—afraid to believe. Nothing but sheer urgency will ever induce that man to open that book again, and to read its figured page. Is there not something similar to this in man's soul in relation to the Bible? Often has his conscience whispered that he is on the losing side—that he has contracted a fearful debt with his Maker, and has nothing to pay. He knows that the full assurance of such a fact would confound him with terror—would fill him with anguish. He quiets his inward monitor. His delusive peace he retains, by persuading himself that the suggestion is not true. Meanwhile, the Bible is presented to him as a book from God. He is told that it will shed light upon the conjectures which have been harassing his bosom, and reveal in daylight to him the whole truth about his state and condition. In such a case, I ask, how is that man likely to regard the document? Would he dread it as an enemy, or would he hail it as a friend? Is it not probable that a fear of being convinced of a truth, whose very suspicion has filled him often with pain, would cause him to shun the book which contained it—would prevent him from giving to it that

examination, without which he could not ascertain its truths, and therefore could not believe them? There is *social influence.* From the great law of sympathy, man is ever influenced by others. The mass of mankind have no faith in Christianity, and therefore the great bulk of human influence runs directly counter to a belief in this system. There, moreover, is *Satanic agency.* "The god of this world blindeth the eyes of men." Now it may be said, We grant that these moral habits, this latent dread of condemnation, this general current of social influence, and this Satanic agency, are all opposed to faith in Christianity, but are they not found existing in connection with other departments of truth? We think not. Man's moral habits are not generally opposed to physical or mental truth. Nor is his fear; for he is not afraid to look any abstract principle in the face; and the fields of general science and literature he can travel with a buoyant heart and a fearless step. Nor is social influence: the more general intelligence he possesses, the more respect would he command from society. And with regard to Satanic agency, we argue that the more knowledge one obtains, if his heart remains depraved, the more capacity for evil; and therefore the "prince of darkness" has no object in checking the mere progress of the intellect. One may penetrate the earth's heart, bring up old worlds to life, and add a thousand centuries to our history. Another may walk the starry vaults, weigh the systems in his balance, and gauge them with his Euclidian lines. A third may enter into the divine arcana of spirit, analyze its operations, and ascertain its laws. What motive could the master-spirit of darkness have to check these noble intellects in

their strivings after knowledge? Does he not know right well that such knowledge, whilst it has no power to destroy moral depravity, has, nevertheless, a capacity to make that depravity less offensive—to enrobe it in beauty, and to invest it with power? But the case is different in relation to Christianity; the belief of its truths emancipates the spirit from his empire, and raises it into the "marvellous light" of holiness and God. If, then, there are circumstances connected with Christianity repugnant to faith, which you find not associated with the general system of physical and mental truth, is it not fair to infer, that whilst, in general, all that a man requires to produce faith is clear testimony and a free intellect, yet that, in relation to Christianity, something else may be necessary? Yes; and unless it has some auxiliary, we may well despair of its ever effecting that moral reformation which it proposes, and which is the great demand of our fallen nature.

But we must recur to our former statement that conviction for sin is the work of the Spirit. It is "a work which no earthly power can accomplish. No human teacher can do it. Conscience cannot do it. Law, in none of its forms, human or divine, can do it. Nay, the Gospel itself cannot do it."* Now the point which I wish you to observe is, the *way* in which conviction was wrought into the mind of Felix. It was not by a *direct* effort. It was through the ministry of truth. *The agency was strictly moral.* When I say that the Spirit does this through the instrumentality of the truth, I mean something more than the influences which are "posited" (as the word is) in the revelation He has given. There is, indeed, a sense—a sense not sufficiently

* See Archdeacon Hare's "Mission of the Comforter."

appreciated—in which that Spirit is in the word. His all-living and life-giving inspirations are here. Are there not fountains of quickening thought, down in "the deep things of God," never seen—never tasted yet? It is something more than the *Book-spirit* that I mean, something that uses this as its instrument—*the Spirit himself.* The human writer infuses his spirit into his book, and whatever influence his book produces upon the mind of the reader may be called the influence of his spirit. This is sometimes taken to illustrate the doctrine of Divine influence, but very partial is this representation. So far as the mere influence of the Book-spirit is concerned, there is a parallelism, but no further. Infinitely short is this, however, of the Bible idea of God's agency. Let us not be deceived by imperfect analogies. God's Spirit is not only *in* the book but *with* the book. The personal, conscious spirit of a human author goes not with his work. It may enter regions of which he is ignorant, fall into the hands of thousands of whom he knows nothing, and receive a million misinterpretations, of which he is happily unconscious. Not so with the author of the Bible. He is everywhere. He pervades the soul of every man who takes it into his hand, and there is not a thought which it awakens with which he is not conversant. Am I to suppose that the Infinite Author, who is thus ever present with every reader of his book, cognisant of every thought which it suggests, having at all times his finger upon every spring of the mind, does nothing to facilitate a right impression of his word? Is He a mere spectator? Has He no interests in the processes and results of the thoughts which his own revelation originates? When the reader

is striving after a correct idea of the passage, can He help? Or is He impotent? Will He? Or is He heartless? I confess that the very supposition, that in such a case He exerts no personal agency, is repugnant to my instinctive notions of a God and to all my reasonings. He paints the lily, He directs the sparrow in its flight, and, oh, will He not help the struggling soul? The great Parent—will He not solve the questions of his anxious child? Would any human author if thus present with the mind of his reader, and having a power to afford needed, and perhaps sought, help, abstain from rendering it? "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

I regard, however, this personal agency as always being through the instrumentality of truth, and, therefore, moral. The practical application of this truth will be treated of in a subsequent lecture, and we will now consider *the great argument for religious decision.*

Why should I be religious? Why should I not follow the propensions of my nature? Why should I not allow my passions to encroach on my higher instincts—send their full-tide surges up the moral shore, to lave out every footprint of a God? Why should I not luxuriate in earthly pleasure, blot out the idea of duty, and think no more of "the world to come?" What is the great argument for religion? This is our present question, and in reply to it I shall state, at the outset, what I consider it is not.

Not that it is in harmony with the institutions of one's country. Let it be that religion is recognised in our colleges, our markets, our galleries of art, our halls of science, in

our temples and senates. Let it be that it is more than recognised—that its benign genius, like the sun on the glowing landscape, warms the roots of all with life, and tinges all with beauty. Oh! that it were so! But what then? Am I bound from this circumstance to be religious? Is this the great argument? I trow not. It is, I grant, a reason, a powerful reason, too, why I should search well into its merits; but it is not *the* reason why I should adopt it. If I am bound to be religious, because my country is religious, then if born in Turkey, I should be a Mussulman, or in China, a Budhist. It would follow that Daniel, and Peter, and Jesus were moral delinquents in forsaking and opposing the religion of their country. But, it may be said that the religions of these lands were false, and, therefore, not binding? I grant both the exception and its inference. It involves all that is necessary to my position. It makes the reason for adopting religion to be, not in its harmony with outward institutions, but rather in its harmony with our notions of its own essential truth and rectitude.

Not that it has been recommended by great names. It is, indeed, a great fact in favour of religion, that it has enlisted the sympathies and commanded the homage of intellects the most robust, geniuses the most resplendent, and characters the most useful the world has produced, the peers of the race. To it belong the most majestic and fruitful trees which have ever grown in the forests of humanity. Amongst the greatest poets, scholars, philosophers, and philanthropists on the world's long roll of fame, I find the men who made the Bible their great book, and recommended religion by their holy lives, their noble

deeds, the convincing arguments and moving suasions of their brilliant minds. This is a significant fact; one that should make little men modest in uttering a syllable against a system so espoused.

But let us not take this fact for more than it is worth. No thoughtful man, I presume, would say that it does not give to religion a just claim to the candid and earnest attention of all. It is the wise arrangement of Heaven, that the human family shall advance by the action of mind on mind—the free circulation of thought, and the interchange of soul. He who does not examine the thoughts of the great men who have recommended religion violates this providential law, and neglects, so far, the great means of true elevation. But it is not *the* reason why, in any case, religion should be adopted. If we are bound to receive what these great men recommend, it must be either because of the fact that *they* do so, or the fact that they present nothing but the truth. It cannot be the former, otherwise we are bound to receive all the errors which they, as fallible men, enunciated. It is the latter, and, if so, the great argument for religious decision is essentially distinct from, and perfectly independent of, all circumstances connected with the men who recommend it. We are not religious—we cannot be religious, if in sincerity we call any "man master," *i.e.*, if we receive our religion merely on the authority of others. The fact that my tutor, my sovereign, my father, is religious, is not the reason why I should be religious; and, were they all irreligious, my obligation to be religious would remain as firm as ever.

Not that it confers the greatest blessings on society. It is

certainly a great recommendation to the religion of the Bible, that is invariably productive of social good. He who would estimate its social benefits has only to compare the countries where it has not yet penetrated with those upon which it has exerted the greatest influence—or to compare England in the middle ages with England in the nineteenth century. It has given all the security we possess to property, liberty, and life. The institutions which alleviate woes, dispel ignorance, quicken mind, corrode despotism, develop human resources, guard and promote the rights of man—have not these ever, like the oak from the acorn, sprung from the religion of Jesus? But is the social utility of religion the great argument for its adoption? If so, the obligation to become religious would not be moral—binding everywhere, and at all times. It would be a mere matter of contingency. Individuals living at the crisis when religion is first introduced to their country, might infer, from the sanguinary persecutions and social convulsions which are frequently the concomitants of such an event, that its influence upon the general condition of man was more a bane than a good; so that if benevolent expediency were the ground of its obligation, religion would not be binding on such individuals. The fact is, religion can never be adopted from such a notion. It may be *put on*, but it can never be *born into life*, from such a motive of expediency.

Not that it confers the highest conceivable blessings upon our being. Personal religion is the chief good of man. It is his life. Its blessings surpass all description—all exaggeration. How it quickens, frees, and widens the intellect—brings all its germinant powers under the genializing in-

fluence of truth! How it unseals and purifies the fountains of the heart, gives a crystal clearness, a living glow, a divine direction, to all its streams of sympathy! What healthful serenity does it impart to the troubled conscience —how it cancels its guilt, lifts it to power, crowns it a sovereign, whose voice shall be law, henceforth and for ever! With what generous sentiments, lofty aims, and sublime aspirations does it inspire the breast! It saves the soul, it delivers from hell, it elevates to heaven, it is the one thing needful, it is everlasting life—it is an eternal weight of glory. But is its personal benefit *the* argument for its adoption? That it is a motive—a Bible-sanctioned motive to induce men to think of religion, must be admitted. But that it is the principle which ought to, or does, or can, awaken religion in the soul, must be denied. Religion appeals to self-love to gain attention, but to the sense of right she appeals to get the throne. *Duty and advantage are identical in essence.* The will of God, which is the rule of duty, is ever the fountain of happiness. But as motives, in the minds of moral agents, they are *eternally distinct.* The man who serves God from advantage, serves Him not at all. His sanctity is but a form of selfishness. On his knees he breathes the same spirit as the worldly man breathes behind his counter—*gain.* He despises the world, not because it is an enemy to God, but because his boundless avarice is set upon another that he considers will make him more happy. He prays, he labours, he subscribes, not for moral goodness, but for Heaven. The claims of duty, the spirit of Jesus, the beauties of rectitude, these are not gospel with him. The joys of the world to come, and the *assurance* of getting them—these, like the

gold of the miser, are the only things that come with unction to his heart. To him, Satan's savage and satiric taunt to the old patriarch is applicable, "Doth Job serve God for nought?" The motive of personal advantage is not, cannot be, the motive to obtain that *religion* "which seeketh not her own." The great argument for personal religion is independent of the benefits which it confers. Let it have no advantage. Hush the groans, dispel the midnight, quench the flames of hell; let there be no hell; let the harps of Heaven be broken; let its beauties fade; put out its lights, and turn its rivers of pleasure into wormwood and gall—let there be no Heaven; and the great argument for religious decision will remain unimpaired in its binding force. *Hell*—its *existence* or *non-existence*, its *terminableness* or *eternity*—affects it not.

If, then, the great argument is, not its harmony with the institutions of one s country, nor that it has been recommended by great names, nor that it confers the greatest blessings on society, nor yet that it delivers man from the greatest evil, and secures to him the greatest good—What is it?

These words contain the argument—"IF THE LORD BE GOD, FOLLOW HIM." It is this: *God ought to be served.* The being of a God is assumed in the appeal. Elijah does not say, *if* there be a God. He was not speaking to atheists, but to men who, although they had not the true God, yet had a God—Baal. Perhaps it may be said of all men, that they have a God. Atheism, as a system, is a misnomer. In all its ancient and modern forms does it not ascribe to nature, order, law, chance, the very attributes of wisdom, power, and goodness which we refer to

God?* The real question *always* to be determined is similar to that which Elijah waged and won on the brow of Carmel. Not, is there *a* God? But who is *the* God? Is He a principle or a person: a local idol, or an omnipresent spirit: the absolute *everything*, or the eternal "I AM," as distinct from the universe as the parent from the child, and the sovereign from his subject? Whoever He is, He must be served. Were there no God, there could be no religion. The Divine existence is the basis of all moral obligation. To talk of religion, were there no God, would be like talking of obedience where there is no law, of truth where there is no mind, of reverence where there is no greatness.

Because there is a God, religion is binding. This is the great argument, and this I shall now proceed to illustrate from three considerations:—*Firstly*, from the relation of his being to our being.—*Secondly*, from the relation of his will to our constitutions.—*Thirdly*, from the relation of his service to our well-being.

I. *From the relation of his being to our being.* He is our *Creator*, *Sustainer*, *Redeemer*. The first relationship is necessary to the idea of a God. He who made us is our God, and no one else. But what a relation is this We can form no adequate conception of it. We have nothing analogous to it. It is perfectly unique. We think of the relation of the machinist to the machine which he has constructed; but this is remodelling, not creating. He has brought substances into new combinations, worked them into new forms, and applied them to new uses; but he has produced nothing, nor can he do so. We think of

* See Dr. Macculloch's invaluable work on the Attributes, vol. i.

the relation of the parent to his child—most close, tender, and sacred is this connection—but still infinitely removed from creatorship. The child is not the property of the parent; but we are absolutely God's. What have we that we can call our own? Nothing but our character. Were he this night to say to us, "Take that thine own is, and go thy way;"—into black extinction we should fall, and be seen no more. Well, if we are thus his, *ought* we not to serve Him? If all our faculties are his, ought they not ever to work in accordance with his will? Still more—He is our *Sustainer.* He holdeth our souls in life. His constant visitation preserveth our spirits. If we live every moment *upon* his will, ought we not to live every moment *by* it. He is our *Redeemer*, too. This is a new relationship. It is not like the others, original and universal; not like the others, necessarily connected with the idea of God; not like the others, revealed in the volume of nature. It is one into which He has mercifully entered with sinful man —one which it is the special object of the Bible to make known—one that adds a new force to Jehovah's claims—a force to break into penitence the obdurate heart, to raise fallen spirits from their degradation, and to mould sin-disfigured souls into the very image of God. "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are God's." What an argument to personal religion is this!

> "Oh, how Omnipotence
> Is lost in love! Thou great PHILANTHROPIST!
> Father of angels, but the friend of man!"

II. *From the relation of his will to our constitutions.* The relation of his being to our being is not by any means

sufficient of itself to show, or even, perhaps, to constitute the *obligatoriness* of religion. There must be, in addition to this, two things:—

1. *The faculties of our natures must be adequate to his will.* Power is the measure of obligation. It is the circumference that bounds every line, starting from the centre of duty. What we cannot do, we are not bound to attempt. The command that outstrips our capacity is no law to us. Why is religion not binding on brutes? God is as truly their Creator and Sustainer as He is ours. The reason is because they have not the power to receive it. That our faculties are adequate to the Divine will respecting us, has been maintained in our first address. They are made *for* it—made *to* it. The sun is not more nicely adjusted to the work of lighting the planets, the rolling atmosphere to the purposes of life, these bodies to all the laws, influences, and sceneries of this material universe, than are all the powers of the soul adjusted to the work of worship. To trace effects to causes—to discern moral distinctions—to reverence greatness—to love excellence—to praise goodness—these are the sacred functions of religion; and whilst that seraph, glowing with rapture in the full sunlight of the Eternal, can perform nothing higher, that human babe, gazing for the first time with wonder at the stars, possesses an organization which, when developed, will have ample powers to do the same.

2. *The intuitions of our nature must be congruous with his will.* There are certain instinctive sentiments in men which can never be reversed, never uprooted; are independent of time and place, are common to the savage and the sage, to the saint and the sinner. They outlive all systems

they defy all forces. As the vital sap changes the forms and foliage of the tree, they modify philosophic theories, political systems, and social institutions. They are above all law—"they are a law unto themselves." Let, for example, all the sovereigns in the wide world unite to enforce laws that a mother should hate her baby, that a man should believe a contradiction, that the son should despise his kind parent, that men should love either dishonesty or falsehood for its own sake:—Would not this legislation be as powerless as if it enacted that the wild winds should not blow, or that the incoming tide should not advance? There is something in the peasant's bosom mightier than all the princedoms of the earth. The outward systems which clash with those sacred things which God has put into human nature, are in jeopardy every moment like houses on the volcanic hills, destined to be engulfed in an unseen but Divine element, that shall rive the mountains and shake the globe.

If there be such sentiments, it is manifest that the will of God, to be *felt* binding, must harmonize with them. I do not say they are the foundations, or the rule of duty, but I do affirm, that where a command is felt to be incongruous with these sentiments, the rectitude of such a command cannot be appreciated, and therefore its obligation cannot be felt. Were He—with profoundest reverence I venture the supposition—were He malevolent and false, then, though He commanded me to love Him with all my heart, and to trust Him at all times, whilst I should feel that disobedience would be my ruin, I could never feel that obedience was my duty. The mandate would run counter to those instinctive sentiments which I have, to love only

the *loving*, and to trust only the *true*. But the will of God —blessed be his name!—accords exactly with all our notions of moral duty and propriety. *To every precept in that will, our inmost sentiments respond—Amen.*

III. *From the relation of his service to our happiness.* Whilst it has been maintained that happiness is not the reason why a man should adopt religion, it must be readily admitted that it is an evidence, a necessary evidence, that it is right—*i.e.*, that it is the will of God. No truth seems more fixed in a man's conviction, than that happiness is the great law of the universe. The *design* of everything seems to be happiness. Each sentient being that uses his faculties in harmony with his nature, finds an Eden—a heaven. Happiness is everywhere—it breathes through every part of nature. It murmurs in the brook, and sports in the dancing wave. It streams serenely from the stars. It comes tiding down in life from the sun. It blooms in the fields and forests. The winds waft its music to every ear. It is an omnipresent element. It overflows the world. It springs up like a well of life from the great heart of things. If, therefore, it should be found that religion does not yield happiness, that happiness is not its invariable attendant, should we not have such a reason to question whether it was the will of God or not as would prevent us from bowing to it as a duty? But what is the fact? Just this: "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." The happiness which uniformly attends it, shows that it is the will of God that man should adopt it. He wills us to be religious, that we may be happy. The relation of his being to our being, his will to our constitution, and his service to our happiness, are

subjects capable of indefinite expansion. Sufficient, however, has been said to show that, *because there is a God thus related to us, religion is binding.* RIGHT, my young brothers, is your Pillar. Follow it, and it shall light you through the desert, divide the threatening seas, and conduct you into the promised land. Neglect it and you will die in the wilderness. Oppose it, and it will enfold you in a midnight, and engulf you in a ruin, more terrible than signalised the catastrophe of the Egyptian host.

LECTURE V.

THE UNCONQUERABLE POWER OF MANLY DECISION.

The importance of regarding the *obligatoriness* of religion as the reason for its adoption. The prevalence of a mercantile religion. The three Hebrew youths illustrate the unconquerable power of religion. Their conduct shows that it is a principle superior to every other force that can possibly act upon a man. It is superior to the love of order—to the love of show—to the love of sympathy—to the love of power—to the love of pleasure, and to the love of life. Its power consists in its *naturalness*, *concentration*, *spiritualism*, *rectitude*, *anticipation*, and *Divinity*

THE UNCONQUERABLE POWER OF MANLY DECISION.

IN discussing the great argument for manly decision, we have seen that the harmony of religion with the institutions of one's country, the recommendation which it has received from great names, the immense blessings which it confers upon society, our individual dependence upon it for our well-being now, and in the interminable hereafter, give to religion conjointly—and some, indeed, separately—forcible claims to the most earnest and reverent attention of man. Indifference to a religion associated with such circumstances is a gross perversion of every dictate of reason—of every sentiment of the soul. It is a reckless trifling with interests the most momentous and eternal. It is spiritual suicide. I know of nothing comparable to its folly—it is unparalleled and appalling. Whereunto shall I liken it? I think of the captain, lounging thoughtlessly in his cabin, whilst the crew on deck are battling with the fiercest hurricane that ever rent the clouds or lashed the deep. I think of the general, reading sentimental tales, revelling in the sickly and unmanly literature of romance, at the moment that his army is in the thickest of a fight that is to decide the des-

tinies of his country, and whilst, perhaps, the very tent in which he enjoys his idle reverie flaps, and creaks, and reels, amidst the prancing of maddened steeds, the clashing of arms, and the piercing shrieks of the wounded, as they fall to rise no more. But the conduct of such a captain, and of such a general, monstrous though it be, is seemliness itself, compared with the conduct of the men who are spiritually careless about a religion on which is suspended the immortal destinies of the race.

But truly mighty as is the force with which such considerations as those to which we have already referred urge religion on our attention, we must remember that they do not constitute the great argument for its adoption. Its *obligatoriness is the argument.* Because there is a God whose being sustains a certain relation to our being; whose will, a certain relation to our constitutions; and whose service, a certain relation to our happiness—or, in other words, because He is *the* God, we are bound to be religious. It may be asked, Why insist on this as being *the* reason? Why not allow it to stand in the common list of motives? I have a solemn impression—an impression which deepens by thought, that *man can never become really religious, unless he is convinced of its moral obligation.* A belief in its advantage may, and often does, awaken his interest on its behalf. It may warm the depths of his heart with feeling, inflame him with enthusiasm, make him regular in religious observances, quicken him to assiduity in the cause of benevolence, prompt him to self-denial, robe his character in seeming sanctity, and make him known as a saint. But if the conviction of *duty* has not penetrated his inner being, "the root of the matter is not in him." His religion is in the

passions, not in the conscience—in the senses, not in the soul. It is embraced because of what it will *do*, not because of what it *is*. It is put on, not as the "beauty of holiness" —the white raiment of the saints, but as a mystic enchantment to frighten evil spirits, and to quench the flames. It is, with him, the wherewith to get Heaven, and not its elemental germ: not a something bridging the mighty chasm between the soul and its Maker, and filling it with a Divine influence that shall act on all its faculties, mingle with all its operations, breathe new life into all its powers, and touch all its chords into harmony. It is to be justly feared that this religion, which is nothing more than a mercantile calculation of interests, is too general amongst us. Men are serving God for wages, rather than for love. Were a divinely accredited messenger to descend from the skies, and to assure Christendom, on the most conclusive evidence, that there is neither Heaven nor hell, what do you think would be the result? Would there be no sanctuaries deserted?—no religious societies broken up?—no names cancelled from subscription lists?—no apostacies from Christianity? Alas! the religious degeneracy of such an event is too probable to question. And yet, would such an assurance lessen one iota the obligation to be religious? or the guilt of not being so? By no means. The religion of principle is the only true religion. It may be said, does not the pulpit minister to this mercenary religion? Have we not more "persuasives" and "alarms" than moral reasonings?—more anecdotes than truths?—more appeals to the selfish passions than to the moral judgment?—more addresses founded on maledictions and benedictions, than on the just claims of God, as the everlasting Father and

merciful Redeemer, to our profoundest love and constant obedience? Any such method of urging religion on the attention of man, I shall not defend: my object is to impress on you the fact, that the religion that is not of faith—of moral conviction—is no religion at all. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

From the preceding remarks, you will discover what use should be made of the *advantages* of religion, to which, in this and the following lecture, our attention is to be directed. "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it." Remarkable words these! indicating, that whilst in religion man realizes the greatest conceivable blessing—*finds his life*, yet that the blessing never comes to him, if he in his religion seek it as an end. Heaven grows out of the right: hell, out of the wrong. In these hearts of ours are the *nebulæ* of our future homes.

The unconquerable power of true religion is one of its advantages and is our present subject.

A magnificent illustration of the invincible energy with which religion invests the human soul is afforded by the case of the Jewish youths and Nebuchadnezzar. We gather from the history of these youths, that they were of the higher ranks of Jewish society—young princes and well educated, "cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace." They had been carried away as captives from their country into Babylon. In consequence of their marked superiority in mind and manners, the king raised

them to high offices in the state. Not long after their elevation, inspired by some wicked impulse, the monarch meditated the formation of a new national god. His plans were speedily realized. Accordingly, an idol, in the form of a colossean image of gold, was raised "in the plain of Dura," to be worshipped by all within his dominion. The day for its dedication was appointed, and the imperial mandate went forth. The herald cried, "To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." To this monstrous edict there was a general response. The higher classes leading the way, the others followed, and a nation of men, yielding to the superstitious and perhaps crafty wish of a vile despot, prostrates its soul at the foot of a dead lump of gold. These young men, however, were faithful among the faithless. They had souls, and they knew it. They had principles, and they felt their power—principles which would not allow them to give the slightest sanction to such an iniquitous parade—such an insult to the God of heaven. Their consciences bade them be firm—and firm as the granite hills they stood. They refused to bow down and worship that golden image. The proud monarch was enraged. He summoned them into his presence. They appeared, and with "fury" he reiterated the threat, that if they worshipped not, they should be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. What was the

result? Did their spirits cower at his infernal menace? Did they give any sign of equivocation? Did they utter the slightest whisper of apology? Did they ask for more time to consider the subject? No. Fronting him with an unbending form, with an undrooping head, erect in all the consciousness of insulted manhood, and looking, it may be, full into his savage eye, they, without the pause of a moment—as if hesitancy in such matter would be a crime said, "O NEBUCHADNEZZAR, WE ARE NOT CAREFUL TO ANSWER THEE IN THIS MATTER."

Now I am desirous to establish the just inference from this—that religion is a thing of *unconquerable power.* Young men too often associate the idea of weakness with religion. They think it a thing suitable only for women and children, and nervous men. Were we to judge of it from the conduct of some of its professors, we should undoubtedly stamp it at once as a thing effeminate and childish. There is an air of consummate littleness about some of its avowed disciples. Their thoughts are inanity itself. Their utterances are feeble. Their sentiments are sickly. There is a contemptible meanness in their spirit. They descend to doings, from which the mere sense of natural honour would cause many a worldly man to recoil with disgust. Their voice is whining, their talk often jargon, whilst their whole demeanour is as if they had been robbed of their common sense, and stripped of their nature. But, for all this, religion is not responsible. This is not its natural development, but its distortion—not its portrait, but its caricature. Its legitimate tendency on the soul is, not to cause its faculties to run into weak and worthless weeds, but to work them out into forms fair and majestic as the

cedar. I am anxious that you should feel, that religion gives not to man the spirit of fear, but of POWER, AND OF LOVE, AND OF A SOUND MIND,—that it is an element which calls out, invigorates, and consolidates all the energies of being, into a character of the most robust and invincible greatness—that it gives man a heart more brave than ever throbbed in the bosom of a world's Leonidas, a heart to front the fiercest tempests with a song, and to shout victory even in the agonies of death.

In illustrating the position that religion imparts to man *unconquerable* power, I invite attention to the *proof* and *reason* of the fact.

I. *The proof that manly decision on religion imparts unconquerable power to man.* All power is in mind. Matter is the offspring of spirit. Its ten thousand forms are the unfoldment of ideas. Its wondrous motions are derived from mental impulses. The power of the warrior that lays whole armies dead upon the field, the power of the orator that bends a thousand minds to his will, the power of the poet that turns a nation's heart into music—all dwell in the soul. All these powers are resolvable into certain instinctive principles, which are ever prompting us to action. Amongst the strongest of these elements may be mentioned, the *love of order, the love of show, the love of power, the love of sympathy, the love of pleasure, and the love of life.* If there be, therefore, any principle that can obtain a mastery over this soul—the fountain of power; that can enlist its impulsive sympathies and varied capacities, and force the whole current of being into its service—must not such an element be regarded as the unconquerable power? Just such is religion. It is in the soul stronger than any other principle that can move

it. The case before us leads us to infer, that it is superior to all the potent principles which have been specified.

It is superior to the love of order. Order is heaven's first law. A love of it is impressed upon every heart. It is often misdirected, but that it exists and works, admits of no question. It is that which induces man, on the one hand, to form governments, and on the other, to obey them. If those who rule do not always rule for the sake of order, it seems certain that those who obey, do so. There are but few such firebrands in any country as love confusion for its own sake. What is it but this instinct that has in all ages induced the masses of society to remain passive, under political wrongs the most grievous and grinding? But religion in man is something stronger than this. Did it not prompt the Jewish youths to set at defiance the authority of their country? Yes, and it has induced many to do the same. The Peters, and Johns, and Luthers, have broken the stagnant quiet of nations, because they determined to obey God rather than man. "Rather," said the great reformer, "let heaven and earth be blended together in confusion, than one jot of truth perish."

It is superior to the love of show. There is in man "the lust of the eye;" susceptibility of being carried away in admiration, by outward pomp and show. It is discernible in every stage of life, from the earliest dawn of childhood to the closing night of age. The gay apparel, the ornamental dwelling, the costly furniture, the affected styles of life—all indicate its prevalence and strength. From it springs half the trade of the world. Human ingenuity and art present their choicest productions at its shrine. False

religions minister to its ever craving appetite. In the case of the young Jewish princes it was appealed to in a form the most imposing, and for a purpose the most vile. All the magnificence of the empire was spread before their eyes, whilst on their ears fell strains of music of unusual power. All the circumstances were suited to wake up their young imaginations, and to incite them to mingle in the common devotion. But they resisted the temptation nobly. They had a religion which raised them above the control of show, gave them a keen eye to penetrate through the imposing forms of iniquity, and look into its odious heart, and a hand to take off from the head of depravity its most splendid mask, and lay it bare in all its native and repulsive deformity.

It is superior to the love of power. No remark is needed to show the universality and force of this instinct in human nature. Like every other natural principle, it is a good in itself, and when controlled by the law of right, helps to urge us on our upward path. But where it has grown into an ascendant passion, it has proved a greater curse to our race than the destructive tempest, the belching volcano, or the pestilential blast. It has made what the world has falsely and wickedly called its *heroes*. Under its inflaming and impulsive influence men have grown into monsters. To attract attention, to get a name, to spread wide their influence, to reach a throne, they have rifled the homes of love, trampled upon the holiest rights of man, dyed continents in blood, and trodden empires in the dust. It was this passion that worked out, and condensed into fearful energy all the great faculties of him who is the prince of modern murderers. Napoleon had no higher impulse to move that

tactical intellect, and prompt that iron arm of his. This was his inspiration. But religion is mightier than this instinct. These young Hebrews had that love of power common to our nature. They had tasted what power was. Perhaps the prospect of higher office was before them, and glory loomed brightly in the distance; but rather than swerve from religious principle, they promptly surrendered all. It is common for young men to strive after power; common, when they have it, vainly to exult in its possession—become dizzy on the heights they have reached, and hold on their way at all hazards. But it is a rare and sublime thing to behold them, as now, on its lofty altitude, adhering firm to principle, reverencing conscience, and holding high offices in subordination to right. This is the power of religion.

It is superior to the love of sympathy. A desire for the good opinion and feeling of others, is no feeble or useless instinct of the soul. Some men are absolutely ruled by the opinions of others. They rise and fall, and are alternately depressed and elevated by their power. Their spirits bend to their influence, as the willow to the winds. Their ship has no propelling machinery; before they can plough the sea of duty they must hoist their sails, and invoke the gales of public sympathy. They flow only with the stream. Public sentiment is an autocrat, whose authority few ever dare to question, and fewer still to oppose. But religion gives energy to do both. The public feeling of Babylon was rolling, in a full and thundering tide, in favour of this idol worship; but these young men stood against it—breasted its foaming billows, and pursued their course. It does not require much greatness of soul to perform great

feats when the general spirit of the age is in your favour. To become the mouth-piece or executive of public opinion may give a man celebrity, often has done so, but it neither requires nor constitutes greatness. It is greatness not to be borne along by the outward current, but to be self-impelled by the inner conviction—not to be moulded by the genius of our times, but to mould our times by the genius of truth—to make public sentiment, rather than to be made by it. Thus it was with Noah, Elijah, Moses, and all the truly great men in history. It was emphatically so with Christ. "Of the people there was none with Him." Yet He breathed a spirit into his age which has been spreading through humanity ever since, fermenting its dead particles into activity, and assimilating the whole to itself.

It is superior to the love of pleasure. Deep and strong are the appetites of man for pleasure. Neither the requisites nor comforts of life will satisfy. He thirsts for its luxuries and gratifications. The objects of pleasure are as various as the tastes of men. Some seek enjoyment in religion, in benevolent operations and spiritual worship; others, in the search of truth and the acquisition of knowledge; but most—alas! the mass—in materialism, in worldly wealth, in outward gaiety, in gross sensuality. With these the senses are everything, the soul is nothing. Their enjoyment is from without, not from within. Happiness is, with them, a something which streams from the outward, through their senses, and acts pleasantly on their nerves, and not a something which wells up from within, and flows forth to bless. Still, however diversified the objects of pleasure, the instinct is one, and throbs with an all-com-

manding force in every breast. It is the insatiable thirst of being. From the strength of this principle it comes to pass that temptation is a potent thing. It requires courage of a high kind to confront it—to strike it down. Many who have stood with iron hearts, as the martial drum has summoned them to battle, have fallen like children at the soft tones of a Siren. It is on the arena of soul, in the moral conflict for right, that the greatest magnanimity is required, and the greatest heroism displayed. There, single-handed, men have to "wrestle, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places." But religion is mightier than this instinct. What pleasures now did these young men renounce! What terrific sufferings did they welcome at the bidding of duty! And to this splendid specimen of religious power triumphing over the carnal nature, many others could be added. "By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

It is superior to the love of life. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life." This is the utterance of the spirit of darkness. It is full of truth, and full of withering satire, too, and powerfully expresses man's love of life. Of all his natural instincts, there is none more strong. But there is a something, which, when it enters a man, becomes stronger—a something which is his glory, and which all should possess—*religion.* The language implies the cutting truth that man has not this, and therefore he will give up his all for life. It is a foul

libel on the *good* man. He may give, for his life, skin after skin, sovereign after sovereign, house after house, right after right, pleasure after pleasure — until he stands under the naked heavens, stripped of all but sheer existence. But principle after principle, nay, not *one* principle will he give up for his life. Moral truth—fidelity to God—holy purpose—these he will hold with a tenacious grasp, though material fires encompass him—burn his nerves, muscles, bones, body, into ashes, with which the idle winds shall sport. Was it not so with these young men? Was it not so with Daniel? Was it not so with Paul, who said, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy"?

I have referred to what I consider the strongest instincts in human nature—the very springs and regulators of humanity—and I have shown that religion gives man power over all. It stands against the force of governments, and dares to question the authority of kings. It is unmoved by the fascinations of show—it looks through the tinsel, and, beneath the gaudy garb, descries things too mean for noble souls. It fronts public sentiment, defies its violence, and often turns its sweeping current into a new course. It resists pleasure when it clashes with duty, in whatever forms of beauty it may come, or tones of sweetness it may speak. It is prepared to immolate life itself on the altar of moral goodness. If all this be true, is not religion an *unconquerable* power? What on earth can subdue the mind under its influence? "Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are *more* than conquerors

through him that loved us." "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

II. *The reason why manly decision on religion imparts unconquerable power.* Wherefore does it assume the mastery over all the strongest instincts of our nature? What is there in it, thus to lift the soul into an indomitable and triumphant defiance of all antagonistic forces? Is such energy of character as these youths displayed, to be regarded as an extraordinary phenomenon? Is it something which we may look at with admiring amazement, but never hope to realise? Or does it grow out of general principles, as the natural development of religion, and therefore come within the reach of all? These are fair and practical questions. In reply to them, I shall refer to certain principles connected with personal religion, from which, in the nature of things, such magnanimity must ever spring.

There is *naturalness.* Whatever is unnatural tends to weakness. It is so in the vegetable system. Twist the tree into an unnatural conformation, and it will never reach the strength belonging to its kind. The exotic plant, rooted in our soil, never has that firm texture, that stately form, those lovely tints, that sweet fragrance, which it unfolds in its native earth. It is so with animal life. Transport any living creature into an unnatural climate, or put it into an unnatural position, let it partake of unnatural substances, or be engaged in unnatural exercises—whatever is unnatural to it, will steal away its strength. The analogy holds especially good in relation to mind. *Sin is an alienation from nature.* The soul without religion is in an unnatural state. It is a moral plant rooted in a foreign soil, from which no healthy nutriment can be derived—the soil

of error:—a moral creature, living in an atmosphere it was never made to breathe—the atmosphere of sin. An irreligious soul, therefore, is necessarily weak. It does not pulsate with the current of health. It does not wear its lovely bloom. Its action is spasmodic. Its beauty the hectic flush of death. It is diseased, withered, drooping. It is "without strength." But religion brings the soul back to nature, places it in circumstances congenial to its health and growth, plants it in its native soil, breathes around it its native airs, pours on it the rays of its native sun, and waters it with its native dews. That soil is the everlasting truth of God, in which it is "rooted," and from which it drinks up immortal vigour; those genial airs that play around are the generous sympathies of a heart overflowing with love to God and man; those quickening rays come streaming down from the Sun of Righteousness; and those refreshing dews that penetrate its fibres, and rest upon its branches, are the benignant influences of Heaven, ever descending on the good. The soul, in such a state, becomes fair as the lily, fruitful as the vine, and sturdy as the trees that waved of old from the heights of Lebanon.

There is *concentration.* This is another element of power connected with religion. The force of all the great energies in nature depends upon condensation. Light, steam, air, electricity—these diffused, are comparatively powerless; but compressed, they are mighty. It is so with mind. When it oscillates between different points, when its attention is distracted by different objects, when it is divided in its sympathies and plans, it is without strength. It is a mere toy in the hand of circumstances,

a feather in the wind, a straw on the bosom of the stream. "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." The mind is often even in a more powerless state than that of unfixedness. Its energies are sometimes in violent conflict between themselves. Reason and inclination, passion and conscience, are frequently at war with each other. Now religion unites the heart to fear the name of God—brings all the powers of the soul to one point. I know of nothing else that can produce this coalition within. There are some things that will enlist the passions, but not the conscience, so that the man who pursues them will be weak and timid, because in every step he is opposing the greater part of his nature. He is "a reed shaken with the wind." But religion catches all the rays of the soul, and bends them to a focus—arrests all its currents, and turns them into one channel. Before that blazing focus, or that resistless torrent, who or what can stand? Paul was a prodigy of power. He was in perils oft, without fear. He endured grievous afflictions without complaint. He faced malignant foes, but never felt dismay. The frown of authority ever rested like a dark shadow on his path, yet he traversed the world with a fearless soul and with a resolute mind. Hundreds of his generation he converted to his own views. He shed an influence upon his race, pure as the light, wide as humanity, and lasting as the soul. One expression explains his power—"this one thing I do."

There is *Spiritualism.* This is another element of power. By this, I mean a supreme regard to the concerns and the claims of mind. The man who holds his temporal interest as transcendent, must, on that very account, be fearful and

feeble. His treasures are here. Everything that gives value to his life lies within the horizon of sense, is subject to decay, and capable of being wrested from his hands. He knows that if he lose what he has on earth, he loses his all, and to such a loss he is exposed every moment. His physical weal is therefore his great object of solicitude. He cannot afford to endure a pain, to brave a danger, to make a sacrifice, for he has nothing higher than his present comfort, nothing to receive in exchange for what he forfeits here. How can such a man have power? Winds, lightning, floods, disease, commercial depression —everything, in fact, animate or inanimate, that is likely to pluck the flowers, blight the beauties, or steal the fruits from his paradise, he crouches to, as a slave to his master. He may be exhilarated, and talk as a brave man, when all things flow in his favour, but let fortune reverse her course, and he is crushed, and becomes feeble as a child. As long as he loves the outward supremely, so long he must have a cringing, servile soul. But the religious man is impressed with the incomparable importance of *spirit*. The pearls of oceans, the gold of continents, the lustre of stars, —these are puerilities to him in the presence of a *soul*. Outward things are valuable to his eye, only as they subserve the interests of the spiritual within. He is inspired with the idea of Jesus—that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he hath. His home, even now, is not amongst the things that are seen and temporal, but in regions unseen and eternal. He sits in heavenly places. His treasures are where neither moth nor rust can corrupt, and where no thief can break through and steal. He estimates death a gain. Of what can such a man be

afraid? If he be not afraid of him, or them, who can kill the body, what power on earth can terrify him?—For is there aught that can do more than *kill?* He knows that no sword can slay, no fires consume, no oceans drown his soul. Hence, with an indomitable spirit, he can

> "The dark'ning universe defy
> To quench his immortality,
> Or shake his trust in God."

There is Rectitude. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion." A guilty conscience is incompatible with strength. It makes men cowards. It peoples solitude with scaring spectres, and gives to silence portentous sounds. Thus men are in fear, where no danger is. They have a fearful looking for of judgment. Like one who absconds for murder, they tread the path of life with a flurried step, fancying every strange object to be the form, and every sound the footstep, of the avenger of their guilt. But the righteous—the man of moral integrity and approving conscience, is bold as a lion. He reposes in his strength. His prowess is undaunted and undauntable. Through the mediation of Jesus, he has obtained a consciousness of peace with Heaven. He knows that God is his friend, and if He be for him, who can be against him! He can do what no worldly warrior ever did, sing the forty-sixth Psalm, with an intelligent mind and a triumphant heart.

There is Anticipation. Hope is an element of power. See that mariner anxiously contending with the most tremendous tempest that ever met a sailor on his watery path. Would you take from his mind all fear? If so, assure him

that he shall reach his desired haven in peace and safety; and at once his agitated heart will rise into the calm dignity of self-possession and power. It is thus that religion, by awakening hope, inspires man with strength. Amidst the greatest trials, afflictions, and perils, to which humanity can be exposed, he is assured that he shall reach, at last, the peaceful home of the good. He therefore reckons that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. It is said of the early Christians who suffered persecution, that they "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in Heaven a better and an enduring substance."

There is Divinity. "The hand of the Lord was upon him." "All my springs are in Thee." "He was full of the Holy Ghost." "The power of Christ resteth upon me." Such are expressions used in relation to the powerful men of whom we read in the Bible. They express the general truth, that God is *with* and *in* the man, whose soul is *under* the influence of right. He is mighty through God.

Now if religion is stronger than the strongest instincts of our nature, and involves such elements of power, then cease to associate with it the notion of weakness. It is power itself—power to calm the tempest of passion, and guide the impulses of the heart—power to burst every spiritual fetter, and lift the soul to freedom—power to resist evil, to overcome the world, and to build up the empire of truth—power to serve God, follow Jesus, and bless mankind—power to face danger and death, without fear, and to endure suffering without complaint. The man whom all

Europe dreaded a few years ago, whose foot-tread shook the civilized world to its centre, had no such power as this. His power was in ambitious impulses stimulated from without, not in noble principles uplifting him from within. When his prospects were blighted, he truly said, "*everything* that belongs to me is stricken." Amidst the solitude of his Island-home, he was heard to murmur, in childish weakness, "I was Napoleon; now I am nothing—my strength, my faculties forsake me." Had he possessed the *true* power, would he have felt and spoken thus? No. He would have touched the barren rocks of St. Helena into verdure, made them bloom as an Eden—turned the lonely isle into an enrapturing Patmos, and made the monotonous billows, as they broke on the shore, chant heavenly music to his all-conquering soul. The *true* hero,

"When he falls, writes VICI on his shield."

LECTURE VI.

THE NECESSARY CONDITION OF HAPPINESS—MANLY DECISION.

The general cry of humanity for happiness. In what does it consist? Not exclusively in sensitive pleasure—not exclusively in meditative pleasure—not exclusively in social pleasure—not exclusively in pietistic pleasure. But in *some principle which shall insure a proper participation in all these pleasures.* Religious decision is this principle. This argued from the following considerations: I. That complete fixedness of soul is a necessary condition of human happiness. II. That complete fixedness of soul can only be obtained in connection with religion. III. That the fixedness of soul obtained in connection with religion is a guarantee of complete human happiness. Religion harmonizes with the unalterable laws of happiness.

THE NECESSARY CONDITION OF HAPPINESS—MANLY DECISION.

HAPPINESS! What a magic word! How much does it represent!—The one desire of humanity, "our being's end and aim." "Who will show us any good?" The savage, the sage, the sensuous and the spiritual—the ruler and the ruled—this is the anxious utterance of all. From cottages and castles, shops and sanctuaries, markets and monasteries, it rises as the deepest cry of souls. Man, in all places and periods, is seen going out in quest of "the fountain of life." He pierces the heavens, he excavates the earth, he traverses continents, he navigates oceans, he explores matter and mind, in search of the Elysian stream to quench his raging thirst. "IT IS THE EARNEST EXPECTATION OF THE CREATURE." The aspiration is the mainspring of the human world—the restless spirit in every wheel of human advancement. It is the tide in the ocean of life—it stirs the depths, upturns the waves, and rolls it onward to the shore. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

The universality of this intense desire is a plain indication that there are sources of enjoyment existing somewhere, of which the masses of men have not yet participated. For surely it must be conceded that the benevolent Creator

would never implant desires for which he made no corresponding provision; nor would their craving be painful if men had recourse to the right supply. From the exuberance of the Divine goodness on the one hand, and the restless dissatisfaction of men on the other, I infer that there are "rivers of pleasure" somewhere to allay the general thirst—streams to make glad the city of the living God, which but a few have yet discovered, and of which fewer still have become satisfied recipients.

If, then, there is happiness provided, commensurate with this all-absorbing desire, and yet so partially enjoyed, and consequently so generally and earnestly sought, does it not behove us to inquire *Wherein does manly happiness consist?* To this truly momentous question, I answer:—

Not exclusively in sensitive pleasure. To say that the pleasures of the senses form no part of true human happiness, would be to utter a falsehood which the philosophy of our nature and the experience of mankind would contradict. Man is as truly sensitive as spiritual. He has an organization made up of a thousand parts; the healthy harmony of these parts to each other must be necessary to his well-being. He has a large class of sentient wants and appetites; the proper supply of these wants, and the gratification of these appetites, are surely indispensable to his complete enjoyment. His senses are not only faculties for spiritual labour, but avenues of material pleasure—avenues into which nature is ever streaming her delights. If the Almighty did not design that this should be a part of our happiness, why did He invest us with such susceptibilities and make such munificent provision for them? Why has He made the earth to yield not only the food we

need, but the beauties we admire? Why has He covered the turf with flowers, built up the hills in sublimity, spread out the ocean in grandeur, and bespangled the firmament with stars? Why does He make the air not only breathe life, but waft the sweetest odours, and pour on us inspiring sounds? Why, if not that we might be filled with sensitive delight? It is a one-sided philosophy or a mawkish religion that would deny sensational pleasure, as an element in human happiness.

But whilst we concede to it thus much, we deny that it is either the exclusive or the chief element in human happiness. Practically, however, it has ever been adopted as such, by the vast majority of our race. Against making material pleasure the *chief good*, I would urge the following considerations:—

It subjects the spiritual in man to the material. The human intellect being subordinated to mere animal instincts, has given birth to three mighty forms of evil: *Sensuality*, *worldliness*, and *vanity*. Under the first form, man seeks his happiness in the pampering to appetites, and the full gratification of the animal nature. He overlooks the claims of intellect, the interests of the soul, and the destinies of eternity, in the transient pleasures of sense. Under the second form, he seeks his happiness in *gain*. To *have*, is to be happy. Wealth is everything to him. He denies himself. He mortifies his flesh to gratify his love of gold. Ease, health, pleasure, life—all shall go for gain. Costly mansions, wide-spread acres, gallant fleets, funded prizes—his heaven is in these. The worth, the independence, the happiness of a man, he estimates, not by his principles, but by his purse—not by the moral greatness of his soul,

but by the conventional value of his estates. Under the third form he looks for happiness in outward show. The vain man's idea of bliss is superiority. Whatever in station, dress, talent, appearance, possession, will raise to distinction, command attention, or insure applause, he ardently covets as the chief good. These are all forms of the evil one—making the soul the servant of the senses. These forms, though of one parentage, are different. Under the first, man would sacrifice everything to the body: under the second, he would sacrifice the body to wealth; and under the third, he would sacrifice both to power. The first is seen most frequently when the intellect is in an uncultivated state; the second, where it has been educated under mercantile influences; and the third, where it has been trained in the circles of fortune and fashion. These are the giant forms of evil that stalk through the length and breadth of society. They pollute virtue at its head-springs. They obscure the vision, destroy the liberty, enfeeble the powers, and blight the prospects of man, in every age and clime.

Another argument I urge against making material pleasure the chief good:—*Its inadequacy to man's nature and duration.* Had man no soul—no moral wants—no spiritual relations—no immortal cravings; were he nothing more than the irrational creatures that sport at his feet, this might be sufficient happiness for him. But since he has a soul, it leaves the greater part of his nature—himself, unsupplied. Besides if it could satisfy the whole of his nature, did the soul fully participate in these pleasures, it could not extend to the whole period of his existence. Sensuous pleasure is necessarily *short-lived.* The faculty

for such enjoyment wears out by action, and often dies before the sensualist quits this earthly stage. In the glow and vigour of youth, the appetite is keen and strong; but as years roll on, it becomes more blunt and torpid every day, and frequently leaves the subject stripped of every susceptibility of enjoyment. The desire of the voluptuary soon fails. He is satiated. All the material elements that once delighted him, may still surround him in profusion; but he has no appetite—no relish. Poor ruined man! he, amidst all the pleasures of life, feels now like a fevered invalid at the sumptuous feast—the dainties sicken him to the core. The difference between the two distinct susceptibilities of pleasure in man—the *sensuous* and the *spiritual*—in this respect, is full of meaning. The former deadens with exercise, the latter quickens. The former must die at death, and frequently becomes extinct even before that period; the latter is "renewed day by day, even as the outward man decayeth."

There is yet another argument that might be urged, and that is:—*The grievous injuries it inflicts upon the higher nature of man.* Look at the soul under either of the forms of this evil. Observe the *sensualist*, and ask where is his soul? Where are the workings of its intellect? Where is the unfolding of its mysterious powers? Where are the outstreamings of its divine sympathies? Does not all experience show what is taught both by philosophy and Christianity, that the growth of the animal in man is the stunting of the spiritual—that the carnal *I* must be crucified, before the spiritual *I* can live? The plethora of body ever argues the starvation of mind. On the brow of the voluptuary you may inscribe the epitaph—"Beneath

this sensual brain lies a self-murdered soul." Mark its second form,—look at the *secularist*, the man whose idea of happiness is accumulation. He may discover intellect, but it is intellect developed not by the free searchings after truth, but by the selfish tactics of trade. It is an intellect trained for the Exchange, not for the Universe—breathing the unhealthy atmosphere of Mammon, not the free air of God. And then, as to the higher faculties of his nature, Where are they? Mental vigour, spiritual freedom, moral sensibility, the genial fountains of love,—Where are these? Where is the *man?* You see the rich merchant, but where is the moral man? He has purchased large estates, but in the transaction he has bartered away *himself*. Whilst he has been adding field to field, and cultivating them into fruitfulness and beauty, he has been neglecting the spiritual territory within. Every plant has been blasted by the fires of avarice. Every stream is dried up,—all is sterile. The tree of life is withered to the root. The mind that should have expanded into a seraph, has sunk into a grub. He who seeks happiness thus, is like a man who plunges far down in the depths of ocean in search of some costly pearl: he reaches the point—he touches the treasure—he seizes it—he grasps it, and in the act he dies. The billows bear him back to the peaceful shore, clutching in his stiffened hands that for which he gave his life. The man who holds the world as his chief good, holds it in the paralysed hand of a dead soul. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." What has been said in relation to the sensual and worldly man, will apply to the vain man, or the man of show; and I may therefore dismiss this part of the subject,

entreating you to remember that the evils we have referred to, are at once the most dangerous and common. In answer to the question, Wherein does manly happiness consist? I answer again—

Not exclusively in meditative pleasure. Man has an intellectual nature, as well as a sensuous one. Through the latter he is related to the material universe, and so constituted as to be able to participate in its various elements of joy: and through the former he is related to the great system of truth, and able to participate in the pleasures of thought. To analyse the nature, trace the relations, discover the uses, and inquire "into the reasons of things," is an exercise fraught with delight. *What, How, Why,* here are gates to a triple paradise, where grows the tree of knowledge, whose fruit, man as a being of intellect so ardently desires, and whose branches ever bend beneath luxuriant clusters to delight the soul. Here imagination has her beauties, and reason finds her systems. Here memory has her "works of old," and hope descries her "good things to come."

These pleasures differ widely from those of the senses, They are *dependent on labour.* The sensuous man is more or less passive; the intellectual is active. In the one case, he drinks from fountains already made; but in the other, he creates fountains for himself. "Understanding is a well-spring of life." Intellect must cultivate her own fruit, and that, too, by the sweat of her brow. Working and eating are inviolably associated in the empire of soul. They are *progressive* also. The sensitive has the element of deterioration and decay; but the opposite is the principle of the mental. The tastes become more

refined, and the provisions more plentiful, varied, and delicious. The horizon of happiness widens, and brightens, and glows, as the sun of knowledge rolls up the mental sky. And then, too, they are *less dependent upon the outward.* Sensitive joy has its sources exclusively in the external and material; but not so with the pleasures of thought. The thinking faculty makes men, in a great measure, independent of mere earthly good. By it they can detach themselves from material relations, abstract themselves from the sounds and sights of nature, retire into the world which "He hath set in their hearts"—observe its phenomena, and ascertain its laws, explore its undiscovered regions, hold converse with its spiritual visitants, cultivate its barren tracts, and plant in every valley, and on every hill, the Rose of Sharon, and the Living Vine.

I admit, then, that intellectual pleasure is an element in human happiness—an element of whose importance we are not afraid of speaking too highly, and whose adoption we cannot err in recommending too strongly; for well we know that men are not wont to overrate the ethereal delights of meditation, or to seek them with earnestness too great. Nevertheless, we deny that of itself, or even when connected with the sensitive, it would constitute the enjoyment that would meet the full demands of our nature. Give us both—give us all that can satisfy the senses and the intellect, and you will still leave us the subjects of yet higher classes of gnawing appetites for which no provision is made. I answer the question again—

Not exclusively in social pleasure. By social pleasure, I do not mean the gratification of mere gregarious instincts; such belongs properly to the class of mere sensitive enjoy-

ments. The social element is not animal instinct, but spiritual sympathy—a something which gives us a deep and intelligent interest in our species. From this principle, which connects us to our race, a very large amount of our happiness is derived. Improper society may, and often does, give pain; but our deprivation of all kindred spirits would render our existence intolerable. To speak the sentiments and emotions of our own hearts, and to listen to the utterances of others, to greet our brethren and sisters with a generous soul, and to welcome back the warm response, to love and to be loved, to help and to be helped, to lead and to be led, to intermingle thought with thought, passion with passion, soul with soul—we devoutly thank our Maker for these reciprocations of humanity. They are perennial sources of pleasure, sending down their streams into every heart.

But even this does not constitute human happiness. Give us this—this, combined with the other two, and we have still appetites for which you have made no provision. I answer in the negative, lastly—

Not exclusively in pietistic pleasure. Man has a religious nature, as well as a sensuous, intellectual, and social. He is related to God as well as to nature, truth, and humanity. These form the entire circle of his relations. There is a pleasure to be derived from each. The benignant Creator has thus made every object with which He has connected man a source of blessedness to his being. The pietistic pleasure is that which is derived exclusively from the religious relationship. It is not the full *religious* joy of the man, but the sentimental joy of the hermit. The pleasure of the individual, who, impelled by his religious instincts, denies

himself every other gratification, and seeks his happiness in the cherishing of devout sentiments, and the performance of religious acts. I do not say that happiness is not to be derived from this relationship, for the highest enjoyments of man are to be derived from communion with God; nor that these meditations and devotions of the ascetic and mystic religionist do not yield a large amount of pleasure; but that it does not, and cannot of itself, constitute the happiness of man.

If, then, happiness does not consist in either class of pleasure exclusively, in what does it consist? From what has been said, it might be concluded, that it must be in something that comprehends the whole. There cannot be happiness without the satisfying of all these appetites, the development of all these faculties, felt harmony with all these relations. This conclusion is commended to us, not merely from the constitution of our nature, and the experience of mankind, but from the life and teachings of Jesus. He did not overlook sensitive pleasure—"He came eating and drinking." The first miracle hthat is holy hand performed was at a bridal feast. He did not neglect the pleasures of intellectual pursuits. In early childhood we find Him amongst the great teachers of his country, hearing and asking them questions. Nor were social enjoyments despised by Him. He associated with the multitudes. He journeyed with them on the road. He sailed with them in their skiffs. He sat with them on the mountain. He mingled with them on the beach. He feasted with them at their tables. He joined with them in their worship. He made a special circle for Himself, where his own sentiments might find a response, and his own heart a home. We need

not mention religion—this was the atmosphere in which his great spirit lived. He taught the profound philosophy of human happiness, when He said, "It is written, that man cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"—every manifestation which God makes to the sentient, intellectual, social, and religious nature of man.

What we require, then, I presume, to constitute our happiness, is—not the creation of new sources of pleasure, for those sources are universal, and they come more or less within the reach of every man, but, some principles to guide us to a proper participation in them all—such a participation in them as insures the complete happiness of our complex nature. This is the great desideratum—the one cardinal want of human nature. This principle I conceive to be *religious decision of soul.* The psalmist burst into joyous song, because his heart was fixed.

"O GOD, MY HEART IS FIXED: I WILL SING AND GIVE PRAISE."

The key-note this, which sets our lives to music.

In the illustration of this truth I submit the following remarks:

I. *That complete unity of soul is a necessary condition of human happiness.* I state a universally acknowledged fact—a fact which I require no Bible to teach, when I say that human souls are generally divided—and that not merely against each other, but *against themselves.* The social collision of mind which is constantly disturbing communities, and convulsing empires, is but the effect and type of the conflict of the soul with itself. The quarrels

and wars without are the visible signs and the audible echoes of the inward controversies and battlings of man with himself. The war is about the chief good. The pleasure which one part of the nature would adopt, the other denounces. The fight, too, is over the very fountains of joy. Principles and passions, conscience and interests, the aspirations of spirit, and the instincts of the flesh—between these, the human soul is riven to its centre. Is such a state of mind at all compatible with true happiness? Nay, though every source of pleasure were up-flowing at our feet, with this we should be still distracted, turbulent, tormented at heart. An amicable coalition of these hostile elements, a reconciliation between selfish desires and moral instincts, a thorough unity of heart and soul, are, I maintain, in the very nature of things, indispensable to true happiness.

II. *That complete unity of heart requires a supreme affection.* However some may affect to despise all objective existence in their transcendental notions of the Divine greatness of the human soul, it does appear to me an undeniable fact, that the soul, great though it may be—though it confessedly is—is made to give, not only its love, but its *supreme* love, to objects out of itself, and independent of itself. The deepest hunger of the soul is for an object on which to settle its affections. Urged by an instinctive and restless impulse, it is ever going out of itself in search of this—ever abroad on the wing of inquiry. It will not, it cannot, live exclusively in itself: this is the life of God, and of Him only. The supreme affection, whatever may be its object, is the *centralizing* power of the soul. As in matter, so in mind, the greater force controls the lesser.

This affection is to the soul what attraction is to the material world; that which binds into a firmer cohesion all its parts. Without it there can never be fixedness of heart.

III. *That no supreme affection can unite the heart that is not directed to the Christian's God.* This is clear because the supreme affection necessary to produce entire fixedness of soul must have the full *concurrence of conscience.* All men have a supreme affection, but all men have not undivided and united hearts. Men are not *at-one* with themselves. And why? Because their master-affection does not insure the sanction and sympathy of their higher nature. Some have a supreme love for pleasure, some for wealth, some for fame; but all that such an affection can do, is to secure the purely selfish and carnal part of our nature. *Conscience,* the highest faculty of being, lifts up her voice, utters loud her protests, and wages determinedly her war against it. What is wanted, therefore, to fix the heart of the entire man, is some object of supreme affection, which will attract towards it every sensibility of the soul, and obtain the full acquiescence of that Divine monitor within us, without whose approbation there will never be self-concord and true peace. Now, *there is but one object in the universe supreme love for whom will secure the approval of conscience, and that is* GOD.

"THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THINE HEART, AND WITH ALL THY SOUL, AND WITH ALL THY MIGHT."

This is but a Divine translation of the language of universal conscience—a language inscribed on the portals of every temple, expressed in every act of worship—pagan

and Christian—uttered in every pang of remorse, and repeated with emphasis in every solemn vow. Conscience never has commanded the soul to love any other being supremely, nor can it ever do so: its constitution forbids. This is its *law*—a law of which an old and eloquent author has said: "That her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world."*

My position now is—THAT SUPREME LOVE FOR THE CHRISTIAN'S GOD IS THE ONE SOURCE OF ALL TRUE HUMAN HAPPINESS. I am anxious now to make clear to you, what is to me not a speculation, but a living and earnest conviction—namely, that this *one* affection is in itself the pledge of full and complete happiness to man, it is the well of water in the soul, springing up into everlasting life. In illustration of this point, I shall direct your attention to the *object* and *influence* of this affection.

The *object.*

No supreme affection can become a source of real and lasting enjoyment, unless it has the following conditions. *Perfect excellence.* I hold, as necessary to the happiness of this affection, that the object of it should always have a *moral* character, and that its moral character should be *perfect.* There are some who give the affection to objects which have not the first—to inanimate things, in which there is nothing to gratify the moral susceptibilities; whilst others give it to objects whose moral character is imperfect, in which case there is a something in the affection to *wound* the moral sensibilities. Is it not a fact, that just in proportion to the amount of love which we cherish for any being, is the amount of distress which we

* Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity."

experience on the discovery of any defect in its moral character? For my supreme affection to yield enjoyment, I must have an object on which as I gaze I behold no shadow of a flaw, but discover new unfoldings of moral beauty. A second condition is—*reciprocal feeling.* Unrequited love is always a source of pain. Some give their hearts to dead objects—things that cannot return their affection; others to objects that will not; and the affection in both cases becomes a source of distress. The heart, as it gives its love, sighs for a response, listens for its echo, and sinks into pensive sadness until it comes. A third condition is—*undisturbed enjoyment.* If the object of our supreme love were to become unhappy, from the law of sympathy we should be unhappy also. Another condition necessary is—*inseparableness of being.* How much distress in our world arises from men loving objects from which they are separated! In proportion to the love which we have for an object is the poignancy of bereavement. The object must continue with us—side by side in mental intercourse — coeval with our conscious life, ere we shall find full happiness in loving it.

Now, I ask, Who but the great God meets all these conditions? Is He not perfect? "He is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." Does He not reciprocate our affection? I hear the reply from the ten thousand voices of nature, history, reason, and revelation. "I love them that love me." He pours back an ocean in exchange for a drop. Is He not happy? "The ever blessed God." Is He not inseparable from the object of his love. No event can part us—no distance can divide us. "Who shall separate us from the love of God?"

The INFLUENCE.

The supreme affection of the soul, in order to be productive of complete happiness, must, First, have sufficiency of power *to exclude all painful elements of feeling from the mind.* There are certain states of mind to which men are subject, which are necessary sources of misery. There is *remorse*—that self-criminating and self-torturing power, beneath whose righteous lashings many a guilty soul has exclaimed, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." There is *envy*—at once the offspring and tormentor of selfish souls; the serpent which stings to the core, at every signal of another's prosperity or joy. There is *avarice*—a passion that dries up the life-blood of all that is great and generous in human nature; which fills the spirit with an intense anxiety, first, as to the getting of worldly wealth, and afterwards, how best to retain it. There is *fear*—which always hath torment, which in every indication of danger causes the spiritual powers to tremble like the sear leaves in the wind. These elements, and such as these, are internal sources of misery. Complete happiness is incompatible with their existence. Paradise itself could not make their subjects happy. They are the germs of hell. It is manifest, therefore, that the supreme affection of the mind, to render man happy, must have an influence to cast out these demons from the breast. Has supreme love to God this tendency? Who does not see that it is *the* power to expel them, and the only power which in the nature of things can do so? Remorse, departs before it, for the conscience is pacified with a sense of reconciling love. Envy, it drives from the soul; all men appear dear as children of the same parent; and their common happi-

ness is desired. Avarice, melts away at its presence! It puts the world in its right position: makes it the means to a moral end. Worldly cares no longer harass and distract. The mind confides with a child-like trust in the paternal providence of God. And as to fear—"perfect love casteth out fear." None of these evils can co-exist with this sublime affection. This, like Aaron's rod of old, swallows up all evil enchantments of the heart. It enters the sacred temple within, and, like another Messiah, it expels every lurking desecrator forthwith. It is a flame which not only lights up the dark chambers of the soul, but transmutes into its own pure essence all its elements of feeling and of thought.

The supreme affection of the soul, in order to produce complete happiness, must, secondly, *leave all the sources of enjoyment at our disposal.* There may be—there are—supreme affections which confine a man down to some one source. If directed to material objects, the supreme affection ties him to the mere gratification of animal lusts. If to intellectual pursuits, it restricts to the pleasures of reflection and research, and so on, according to the object on which it is set. The supreme affection, directed to any *finite* object, must limit the sources of human pleasure. Now, from what has been already said, is it not manifest that manly happiness is not to be found in either source separately, but in all combined? Consequently, does it not appear evident that the supreme affection, to be conducive to our perfect enjoyment, must leave them *all* at our command? This is just what religion does. It is a foul libel to say that it excludes from any real pleasure. It ranges the universe of blessedness before us, and says, "all things

are yours." How exquisite is nature to the man who looks at it through the medium of a heart inspired with this noble affection! There is a new radiance in the heavens; the air is more genial; fresh beauties upspring around him. Sights are more lovely, and sounds more sweet. All is full of meaning, full of goodness, full of God.

> "His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
> And the resplendent rivers, his to enjoy
> With a propriety that none can feel,
> But who hath filial confidence inspired,
> Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
> And smiling say, My Father made them all."

Still more, to insure complete happiness, this affection must, thirdly, *induce an agreeable development of all our active powers.* We are endowed with various capabilities of action; and our well-being is dependent upon the employment of these varied energies. Inaction is torpor. Wrong action is misery. Right action is bliss. The supreme affection is ever both the stimulating and directing power of all our activities; and we have only to inquire what kind of activity will yield us happiness, in order to ascertain whether the religious affection in question is at all likely to produce it. To be "blessed in our deeds," they must have the following conditions:—

They must *accord with our moral sense.* There are many courses of action that lead to fortune and to fame, that are far from yielding happiness. The individual feels a moral rebuke in every step he takes, because his path, though conducting to worldly greatness, is not accordant with the universal law of right.

They must be felt to be worthy of our nature. There are

thousands engaged in avocations lucrative and respectable, who, nevertheless, feel unhappy in their pursuits; the objects which absorb their time and engross their attention are not felt worthy. Their work is mechanical. There is neither scope nor stimulus afforded for the higher endowments of their being. Another condition of happy activity is—

It must be prosecuted with all the heart. Labour connected with the higher services of Heaven, unless performed from the full and concurrent sympathies of the heart, would be irksome and depressing. I must state yet another law of happy labour:—

It must awaken ever new and varying interests. From the strong love of novelty within us, and the boundless provision made for it without, I conclude that it was never intended that we should pursue one unvarying course of activity. To move for ever in the same circle, though it be trod by angelic feet, gives no idea of happiness to me. Man has made the *routine* of labour—not God. The soul shrinks from it, and in it groans, and sometimes dies. The "good works" *for us* can never be mere repetitions. God does not require us to repeat our deeds, as the carpenter the blows of his hammer, but as the trees of the forest repeat themselves in the birth of new plants, or as the seasons, under fresh aspects of beauty every year. Now, if the activity of man is necessary to his happiness, and if that activity is always developed by his supreme affection, and if such as I have stated are the essential conditions of happy activity, the question is, Will the supreme affection for God produce an agency that will fulfil such conditions? *It will, and nothing else can.* Who does not see that the activity of

a man working under such an influence will always accord with his moral sense, always be worthy of his nature, always be performed with the full enthusiasm of the heart, and always be fresh as the loving suggestions of his own living soul? And thus all the conditions of a happy activity are realized.

Think not of religion as frowning upon any source of pleasure, but as sanctifying and heightening all; not as distinct from happiness, but one with it—united as the sun and the day. Think not of happiness as coming from without, but as springing up from within. The world is as the soul. It mirrors back its features to the eye, and echoes back its sounds to the ear. The beautiful and the harmonious—the hideous and the dissonant are in us. The bright soul, like the luminary of day, chases darkness from its path, bathes distant objects in its own radiance, and makes all within its sphere bloom into beauty at its presence, and reflect its light. "LIGHT IS SOWN FOR THE RIGHTEOUS, AND GLADNESS FOR THE UPRIGHT IN HEART."

LECTURE VII.

THE EXCLUSIVE WAY TO MANLY DECISION.

There is a way to religion. What is the way? Trusting to human sacerdotalism is not the way; waiting on the use of means is not the way; asking God to bestow religion is not the way; any *direct* attempt either to repent or believe is not the way. The way is, *reflection on religious subjects with a religious design*. I. Explanation. Reflection the prerogative of man—it makes him what he is. Its influence, however, on him is always determined by the *subjects* of his reflection, and the *intent* with which he studies them. II. Proof of the position. 1. The universal principle of rational action. 2. The obligativeness of religion. 3. The regenerative instrument of God. 4. The general teaching of the Bible. The doctrine reflects honour on the Spirit, indicates the right method in endeavouring to make men religious, and shows to every irreligious man his first work.

THE EXCLUSIVE WAY TO MANLY DECISION.

THERE IS A WAY TO RELIGION. The Bible teaches this, man requires it, and all analogy enforces its belief. Means and ends are everywhere and in everything associated. The connexion is one of the most fixed and absolute laws in the universe. Nature is ever busy. Her manifold forces work without rest or pause. New combinations are formed, and dissolutions are effected. Vital organisms are constructed, and broken up again. The tempest is startled into fury, and hushed to repose. The clouds are formed from the deep, they roll up, "by the mountain, and send their springs into the valleys which run among the hills." Season succeeds season; and in every passing minute new scenes are disclosed, new results are developed, and new phenomena appear. "All things are full of labour—man cannot utter it." But on this huge theatre of action every agent has its own method—every force its own process. Nature reaches her stupendous and multiform results not by caprice, but by law. Her aims are all connected with correspondent expedients—she moves through settled processes and by immutable conditions. The same principle of causation which prevails throughout the material system, is equally general and predominant in the spiritual. The phenomena of the mind are controlled by conditions as

unalterable as those which determine the operations of matter. For example, mind cannot think upon a subject of which it knows nothing: or experience a deep sympathy with an object which has never previously engaged its attention: or form an invincible purpose in relation to a course of action without any motive: or pursue with unwearied, laborious, and self-denying perseverance, a line of action in the absence of any antecedent purpose:—such things we feel are mental impossibilities. They stand opposed to the sovereign and inviolable laws of our spiritual being. Mind, like nature, has its revolutions; but its states, unlike the circling seasons, are never the same. Idea succeeds idea, and one emotion gives way to another. The subject of which it is ignorant to-day, appears in the sunlight of intelligence to-morrow; and the object to which at present it is entirely indifferent, may in a few days fill it with the most vigorous sympathy and enthusiastic inspiration. But are its transitions arbitrary? Is not every step governed by laws? As soon could it pass from one state to another by direct volition, as the full-grown tree could start directly from the seed, or the bird of perfect plumage and mature strength spring at once from the dormant embryo of the shell. There are intervening processes, settled and determined, through which it passes into new states. I know that its movements are often swift—swift as the lightning; but its path is not the less real and definite, and by the lamp of consciousness its footsteps can be traced. Against the general truth of this principle I can anticipate no objection. There are some, however, who will question and peradventure deny its application to religion. They may say, "we admit that

generally man can neither become acquainted with any truth, nor interested in any object, by a *direct* effort either of his own mind or that of any other: we grant that there is no method of getting new ideas and sympathies in relation to objects, irrespective of personal attention to certain mental conditions, which ordinarily preside over the spiritual operations of mankind; but in religion it is different. Here an exception is to be made to the rule; for religious knowledge and religious feeling are importations—the products of the Spirit of God. Here mind does not pass through the regular intervening processes from ignorance to knowledge, but is transported by the Divine hand across the natural pathway of the soul." It is with no restriction—no reluctance, that I admit the Divinity of personal religion.* Most fully and most gratefully would I confess, "that every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights:" that it is "not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he hath saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." But I see not how the result which is confessedly Divine, is an objection to our principle; how it can furnish the shadow of a reason for the belief that the state referred to is reached either by setting aside or suspending the regular laws of mind. Are not all the results of nature Divine? Yet are they not all affected in obedience to established laws? Does not the Bible as truly connect the result with the power of truth, and the agency of the mind, as it does with the operations of God?† Do you see more of God

* *Vide* the Third Lecture.

† James i. 18; 1 Peter i. 23; 1 Tim. iv. 16; Rom. x. 14.

in the idea that the end is obtained miraculously, than that it is realized by constitutional means? Is there more of the Almighty discoverable to you in miracle, than in nature? Do you see more of his power, in arresting the sun and moon, and holding them for a few minutes over the heads of the fighting Israelites, than in rolling them on for ages in their spheres? More of his benignity in multiplying the loaves and fishes, than in opening his liberal hand, and through the institutions of nature satisfying every day the wants of every creature throughout his teeming universe? The conclusion, then, that there is a constitutional way to religion, clashes not with the doctrine that it is the work of God; but on the contrary, appears to me to accord with the general teachings of the Bible, the analogies of nature, and with our notions as to the highest modes of Divine operation.

BUT WHAT IS THE WAY? This is the question. I may know that there is *a* way by which certain chemical results are developed, yet unless I understand *the* precise method, those results will never be reached by me, unless in the chances of a mere contingency. The adoption of wrong means in the pursuit of an object is, for many reasons, worse than the neglect of means altogether. There is the exhaustion of strength, and oftentimes danger. It is to be apprehended that many who hold the doctrine that personal religion is obtained in connection with means, entertain the most egregious errors as to the precise nature of those means. Different schools of theology have different theories on the subject. The sinner is often perplexed amidst the multivious and conflicting directions that are given. What, then, is the natural and necessary

ɔcess through which the mind must pass, from a state
religious indifference to that of religious feeling and
:? Mark well the terms of our question. I ask not
at is the way from a state of religious conviction and
ɛious inquiry, to a state of religious decision and en-
ment; but what is the way from an entirely non-religious
a religious state? There is a vast distinction between
irreligious mind inquiring about religion, and an
ɛligious mind entirely indifferent to religious subjects.
e former is not the state in which men as sinners are
versally found to exist, nor that in which they are first
t by the Bible. Mind, in a state of religious inquiry, has
de a start from the common point of human depravity,
l reached an important stage in the process. Directions,
refore, addressed to it in such a state, would not be
ficiently comprehensive to meet the exigencies of the
at bulk of mankind, who are dead in trespasses and
. A large number of the directions which are addressed
sinners, in the New Testament, are specific. They
·e intended to meet certain states of mind more or less
ɛrested in religion. The direction of John the Baptist
the soldiers; of Jesus to the young man who came
king eternal life; of Peter to the conscience-stricken
ltitudes on the day of Pentecost; and of Paul to the
lippian gaoler, are all instances of this kind. The
ɛctions thus given to these different classes vary
ording to the diversified circumstances of their minds,
l it is only necessary to understand those circumstances,
ɔrder to discover and appreciate the beautiful adapted-
s of their respective directions. The diversity of these
ɔired counsels, addressed to individuals already variously

interested in religion, indicates to me that their holy authors would not have considered them the most applicable to the vast masses of our species, concerning whom it may be said, "God is not in all their thoughts." Directions to anxious inquirers reveal a part of the way to religion, not the whole; show some of the stages, not the first; meet the exigencies of the few who are already roused to their feet, and on their way, not the condition of the many who are lying in all the insensitiveness of torpor, and inaction of death. The question we propound is, What is the whole way—the way for all? What is the direction adapted, not for a partial section, but for the total sum? I imagine a man before me. He is, I shall suppose, a fair type of the bulk of irreligious men. He addresses me thus:—"You are a teacher of religion, as such I appeal to you for advice. If I understand your office, it is to teach not merely *what* religion is, but also *how* it is to be gained. I am not religious. My heart is in the world. I delight in its pleasures. I am engrossed with its pursuits. Still, at times, I feel that religion is a desirable thing; and although I am not disposed to renounce at once my present habits of life, it is nevertheless my hope to become a religious man before I die. I would not face the judgment, and meet eternity as I am. As a matter of information, I inquire of you the way for such a man as I am to become religious?" Regarding such a man as a just representative of the great body of men to whom the Bible is addressed, I feel that he has a right to ask these questions, and a right to expect an answer from me; and if I cannot give a satistactory rejoinder,—cannot put the querist in such a train of action, as under God will conduct

him into a religious life, he may well ask me, of what use is my office? The value of the ministry depends greatly, if not chiefly, upon its capabilities of practically meeting such a man, and solving such a question. To discourse to him on the doctrines of religion; to propound the principles on which it is founded, and controvert the error with which it has been associated; to unfold the wonderful privileges attendant on a religious life, and depict, though with terrible and graphic force, the interminable evils that must result from its absence—I hold to be of little service to man, unless you can point him out the way. The theology of religion, however sublime, is not the end of religious teaching. It is but the means. In Christianity theory is to be reduced to practice, science to art, the ideality of the book is to become the reality of the soul; and the work of the teacher is to point out the way.

I would, then, reply to the inquirer as follows:—

That trusting to human sacerdotalism is not the way. Priesthoods are amongst men. These institutions, in relation both to time and locality, have ever been commensurate with human society. Whereinsoever they may differ from each other, herein they all agree—all profess to make the men religious who will confide in their power, attend to their ceremonies, and fulfil their conditions. What else is the characteristic function of all priests—priests of all religions? Is it to wake the dormant energies of the soul, to quicken conscience into a sense of personal responsibleness, to touch the deep springs of being, and set into motion the whole machinery of free and independent thought, to commend themselves, by the force of moral truth, to every man's conscience in the sight of God?

All history answers NO. It is the office of the priest to give, rather than to teach, religion; to lull the soul into religious quiescence, rather than to rouse it into religious earnestness. The priest professes to be clothed with peculiar sanctity, and invested with a mystic power, by which he can make men religious—transform them into virtue by his talismanic touch. When I think of this priestism, in the remoteness of its antiquity, the extent of its reign, and the potency of its influence, I feel that there is a strong tendency in human nature to confide in its pretensions, and a strong reason, therefore, why I should here repudiate its impious professions. It may be said, we, here in England, are not in much danger of falling into this error. We have no faith either in the priesthood of Paganism or Judaism, nor is there much confidence amongst us in that of Catholicism—the compound of both. It may be so. But, paradoxical as it may seem, I yet ask, Has our Protestantism no priesthood? Do not the legally authorised religious teachers of our country claim this sacerdotal power? Let them adminster water to the person of your babe, and in your presence will they not solemnly appeal to God, and say that "the child is regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's church?" And whenever they commit to the grave the body of a person thus baptized, do they not do so, declaring that it is "in the full and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life?" I pass no judgment upon the men who teach this doctrine. I would disclaim all sympathy with sectarian declamation. Let me render to every man credit for sincerity, until he is proved an impostor. Errability is an attribute of our common nature. Still, as the doctrine

es with my conviction as to the *way* in which men are
:come religious, I am bound to raise my humble
st against it. It is an outrage on the common sense
ır nature, and an insult to the rational system of Jesus.
:ndency is to sap the foundations of practical godli-
to prostitute the human intellect to the most con-
tible credulity, and to jeopardize the eternal interests
ın.

eply again to the inquirer,

:*at waiting on the use of means is not the way.* I use
:pression current amongst certain classes of religious
ıers. We are told to employ the appointed means of
:ual improvement; to read our Bibles, attend our
:uaries, and call upon our God. But all this is to be
, not with the idea that there is a Divine aptitude in
means to the desired end—an idea which would
ılate to earnestness in their use; but under the notion
through them, perchance, some extraordinary influence
come down upon our hearts one day, and affect the
ssary reformation. The means, in their view, are not
the laws of nature—ordained instruments of Divine
ation—inviolable pledges of success to the mariner,
chemist, the husbandman, and whomsoever will
ıd to them; but they are like the stagnant pool of
esda, whose healing virtues are not in itself, but in
ɔperations of some mystic angel. They go and come
his alternate visits and returns. This scene is, in
ı, considered the adumbration of the idea. See that
l, deaf, palsied sufferer on the banks of Bethesda,
ler; he has no power to move himself into the sanative
rs. He is anxiously expecting the angel. He knows

not when that celestial messenger will come again. He sometimes fears that peradventure his healing wing will ripple those waters no more. And even should he come, the celestial visit will be of no avail to him, unless there be some hand able and disposed to help him in, for, poor invalid, he has no power to help himself! Thus he must wait. This scene, forsooth, is put to represent our true state, and proper duty in connexion with the means of grace. But where is your analogy? Those sufferers, stretched on the margin of the Bethesdaic waters, are *waiting* there, either because the angel has not descended to impart the healing virtue, or if he has, because there is no hand present able and disposed to lift them into the salubrious font. But who will say that either of these reasons exists in connexion with the means of grace? Has man to wait until the Spirit descend to give to the gospel virtue? Has God not charged it with every virtue we need; and with all that it will ever receive? Is it not SPIRIT and LIFE? And is not the Spirit Himself present everywhere, and always in special connexion with the gospel fountain? He does not, like the angel, come and go. Here He abides. Has man to wait because of his impotence to employ the means himself, and the want of some helping hand? The veriest sciolist in mental study knows, that to speak of a mind being carried into the truth, in a way at all analogous to a body being carried into the water, is a solecism the most palpable. *Self-motion is the essence of soul.* It is the prerogative that God has given it; and with which we have no reason to believe that He ever has interfered, or ever will. Let us away, *then, with* an idea imposed upon us by such an inappro-

priate comparison. There are many weighty reasons against this *waiting* theory. I need but mention one or two. I object to it, first, because it involves an abuse of the means. The ordinances of the Gospel are means of grace only to those who rightly employ them—to others they are means of hardening. Proper use of them is not waiting in them for future help, but working by them with present might. We are to attend to them as the patient attends to the prescription of his medical adviser, or as the pupil to the instructions of his master. Suppose the pupil were to read his Euclid under the same idea as these persons would have us read our Bibles—in order for some genius to descend upon him to initiate him into all its principles, and solve to him its problems. Would that boy ever become a mathematician? I object, secondly, because working, and not waiting, is the invariable condition on which God renders assistance to his creatures. And, thirdly, because the Bible demands the most earnest activity at once. Instead of giving the slightest sanction to the waiting system, it reprobates all delay. It enjoins diligence the most prompt and concentrated. It nowhere calls upon us to wait for the Spirit; but it does exhort us not to "grieve," not to "quench," not to "resist," that Spirit.

I would further tell the inquirer,

That merely asking God to give him religion is not the way. I hold prayer to be the duty of every human being. Men ought always to pray and not to faint. In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, we should make known our request to God. Woe unto him that lives without prayer! But what is prayer? "It is the offering

up of our desires to God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Jesus Christ, with confession of our sins, and a thankful acknowledgment of his mercies." * "It is an act of worship, consisting of four parts—adoration, confession, petition, and thanksgiving." † "An act of worship, a homage to the great God." ‡ "It is a primary duty of religion." § All these statements agree in regarding prayer as a religious exercise. This idea I regard not only as orthodox, but scriptural. Prayer implies religion; it is the act of a religious life. And, therefore, whilst we hold it to be the duty of every man to pray, because it is the duty of every man to become religious, to call upon an irreligious man to pray for religion, is a most manifest absurdity. If he pray he is religious.

Still more, I would tell the inquirer,

That any direct attempt either to repent or believe is not the way. The question, What shall we do to be saved? appears to me different from the question, What shall we do to become religious? The answer to the former would be, Repent and believe the Gospel; but this would be no reply to the latter, for repentance and faith are important elements of religion. Our point is, How are we to have this repentance and faith? One thing seems clear, by no *direct* effort of the mind can they be realized. The sinner is sometimes told that unless he believes he shall be damned—unless he repents he shall perish. All this is true, momentously true. He trembles at the enunciation. He tries to will himself into faith, and to work himself into penitence, but the attempt is fruitless. He is at his wit's

* Westminster Catechism. † Dwight.
‡ Howe. § Foster.

end. He would, but he knows not how. What is the way? This is still the question. What, then, is the reply which would meet the case of the supposed inquirer? Or, to continue the original form of the question, What is the way by which a man who, at present, is indifferent to religion, may, under the Divine blessing, pass into a state of religious sympathy and life? My answer is this: REFLECTION ON RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS WITH A RELIGIOUS DESIGN. This statement may appear so general to some, as to require explanation; and so questionable to others, as to require proof. To the explanation and the proof, therefore, I now invite your attention.

I. *The explanation.* Let us take the words in the order in which they are placed. We begin with *reflection.* The reflective or thinking faculty is the distinguishing feature and glory of man. All the other sentient tenantry of our earth have consciousness. They are sensible of the ten thousand impressions which nature is ever making on their senses. But upon these impressions they have no hold, and over them they have no control. They can neither retain nor expel, weaken or strengthen, one of all their manifold sensations. Like hailstones in summer, their impressions melt away as they fall. Their observations are all outward—they have no faculty to look within. They have no subjective vision or power. Man has all this. He has an introverting capacity—a capacity to turn in upon himself, and think upon what he feels and sees. He can arrest a passing impression, hold it in his grasp, analyze its elements, trace out its relations, magnify or extenuate it, work it into a science, or bury it in oblivion; crush it in its birth, or nurse it to a glorious

deed; disfigure it with depravity, or stamp it with the impress of God. Human life is a constant series of transformations. The cannibal rises into an intelligent and orderly citizen. The rustic clown steps into the highest office of civic life. Wild and barbarous hordes are organized into splendid empires. The peevish infant becomes a Milton, flashing the brightness of his genius upon many a generation, and pouring the strains of his wondrous lyre abroad over nations, and down through centuries. These changes are all effected by the one instrument—THOUGHT. This in man, like fire in nature, is the only elevating force. It is, to him, like the ladder in the old patriarch's dream, that by which he climbs to Heaven and brings seraphs down to earth. Reflection makes man. It forms his character. It builds up and furnishes his everlasting habitation.

But this reflection, which in everything makes us what we are, requires to make us religious the two conditions contained in our general statement. The first, that it be directed to *religious subjects.* Reflection always implies a subject, as perception does an object. The influence of our reflection upon the mind and character will greatly depend upon the class of subjects with which it is engaged. One man so prostitutes his reflective faculty, as to have it generally occupied with subjects of an incontinent character, and the carnal passions naturally grow into the predominant impulse of his life. His reflection converts him into a debased *sensualist.* Another has the faculty generally employed on subjects of a commercial character —gain and loss are the all-absorbing elements of his thought. His reflection converts him into a selfish *barterer.*

Another has his attention taken up chiefly with the affairs of governments and the principles of legislation. His reflection converts him into a *politician*. Another gives his thought and time to scientific observation and experiment; and his reflection converts him into an earnest *philosopher*. Thus it is that the *peculiar spiritual life* of the sensualist, the barterer, the politician, and the philosopher, is generated in the soul by reflection upon correspondent subjects. In like manner is the *religious* life to be produced. There must be reflection on religious subjects. What are these subjects? They are so numerous and varied, as to preclude the possibility of a particular specification here. Speaking, however, in the general, they may be represented as the subjects connected with all our relations and obligations to God. For the sake of brevity and convenience, we may range them under two grand divisions, *ethical* and *redemptive; law* and *love*. The former class of subjects—the law of God—presents a most startling revelation to the moral nature of man, about God and self, and sin and duty. Herein by reflection he sees himself as in a mirror, burnished in the brightness of eternal rectitude. All his sins, even the most incipient and hidden, appear in their full enormity. Like the darkest thunder-cloud they rise upon his soul. They swell and blacken, and spread over the whole firmament of his being. They obstruct every ray of hope, and rouse his conscience with the most terrific apprehensions of a storm. Amidst the dreadful scene he cries, What shall I do to be saved? The other class of religious subjects—those which relate to mediatorial love—are not less exciting and potent. "God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son," &c. There

is a moral omnipotence in these subjects taken together. They appeal respectively to all the powers of our nature—to hope and fear, to the conscience and the heart. The law in the Bible convinces, and the love in the Bible converts.*

But reflection upon religious subjects, mighty though they are, is not all that is necessary: they must be reflected upon for a *religious end.* The end or design is always the most important element in human action; it never matters so much to man, as an individual, what he does, as why he does. The *why* in his operations is always of more moment to him than the *what.* The reason of this is, not merely because his Judge determines his character by his motive, but also because the effect of his actions upon his own mind and heart, whether beneficial or injurious, is dependent entirely upon the purpose which influenced him in their performance. Thus, by his own purpose, he can bring evil out of good, and good out of evil. Things are to him what he makes them. To produce, therefore, a religious result in the soul, it is not sufficient to reflect upon religious subjects. These subjects must be reflected upon for a religious end. Some reflect upon religious subjects from a sinister aim. The Bible is studied as a qualification for lucrative professions, and as furnishing materials for costly books. Others reflect on them from a sceptical design; they search diligently for defects; and gladly seize on apparent discrepancies. Others for literary, scientific, and speculative purposes. Now it must be manifest that reflection on religious subjects, pursued from such different designs, must terminate in very different

* See First Lecture, p. 25.

results. In all these cases, those holy subjects are perverted, their power neutralized, and their efficacy destroyed. Religious good from such methods of study is, from the nature of things, impossible. It is a truth which cannot be too clearly stated, too vigorously enforced—that a man will generally have from the Bible whatever he designs to have in studying it. Worldliness, bigotry, scepticism, these have always come to him from the sacred book, according to his *intention* in reflecting on its contents. So it must ever be. No spiritual good can come to us, either without an intention, or in opposition to an intention. On the contrary, objective good by a wrong intention is alway transmuted into a subjective evil. Man, to get religion from the Bible, must reflect on its subjects with that design. Read it without a design it will be useless, read it with a wrong design it will be injurious, but read it with a religious design and it becomes the greatest blessing we can receive. I would therefore direct the sinner to do—what we maintain he has sufficient capacity for doing—not merely reflect on religious subjects, but do so with a view of becoming religious. Do so in order to have such views of sin as to awaken penitence, such manifestations of God as to inspire our love. Do so for the purpose of knowing God, and doing his will, of correcting our evils and improving our hearts.

These explanatory remarks have, I trust, made evident what we consider the *true method* of becoming religious. We anticipate objections; but need not deal with them specifically, inasmuch as those of them at all entitled to notice, will be met and obviated in the succeeding general arguments. Let us then notice—

II. *The proof.* That the kind of reflection of which we have spoken, is THE WAY from religious indifference to religious life and enjoyment, might be argued from the following considerations :—

From the universal principle of rational action. By this principle is meant the impulsive cause. All action implies impulse. The impulse of inanimate activity is *force*, that of brute activity is *instinct*, and that of rational is *motive;* or, which is the same thing, an *exciting idea.* Mere ideas are not motives—there are thousands of ideas that never move the soul; nor is mere feeling motive—that would be instinct. Motive is a compound of both. It is formed by the joint operations of intellect and heart. It is a *felt idea.* And this felt idea is at once the spring and archetype of every rational act. Every intelligent deed is its effect and embodiment. Do you ever hear of a man changing his conduct, without at once supposing that some fresh and strong motive has found its way into his mind? Or do you ever dream of effecting a change in the habits or pursuits of another, without an attempt to present some adequate motive? If this be a law in rational agency, as I maintain it to be, this is my inference that, as becoming religious involves a great change in human conduct, it must either be effected by a violation of this fundamental law of man's nature, or by reflection on subjects adapted to produce a sufficient motive; for motive being a felt idea, nothing but personal reflection can produce it. In the nature of things it cannot be given. The character of God, the mediation of Jesus, the value of the soul, the joys of the blessed, the miseries of the damned—these stupendous subjects are no motives to me; they are powerless, unless

they engage my attention. God in the Bible gives materials for holy motives, but man by reflection must make them.

From the regenerative instrument of God. By what instrumentality does the Divine Spirit in the exercise of his glorious sovereignty deliver the human soul from the power of darkness, and translate it into the kingdom of Christ? We reply, the WORD—the TRUTH—the GOSPEL. Our reasons for this conviction are, first, the existence of a revelation. If religion is a something directly imparted, does it not seem that the revelation which took so many ages to complete, is a mere superfluity? Secondly, the history of Christianity. If men are made religious without the intervention of the truth, how comes it to pass that vital godliness does not spread—is not known where the gospel is not introduced? Thirdly, the consciousness of Christians. Has Christian experience any record of any religious impression, apart from a religious idea? Fourthly, the declarations of the Scriptures. So clearly and frequently does the Bible reveal the doctrine, that it seems marvellous to me how any student of its pages could possibly entertain a question on the subject. The very terms that designate the gospel imply it. "Word of salvation," "word of faith," "word of life," "word of wisdom," "word of reconciliation," "sword of the Spirit," "power of God," "Spirit and life." Such are the appellations. And is their meaning not obvious? Besides, many are the passages in which it is explicitly stated. Jesus said to the Jews, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth," and to explain his meaning He states, "the words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and they are

life." James says, "of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth," And Peter represents Christians as "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but by the word of God."

Now, if gospel truth is the statement by which God makes men religious, I argue that reflection can be the only way for man to come into the possession of a religious life. Attention is especially required to God's truth, for the following purposes: first, to satisfy as to its Divinity. If, when the gospel is put into our hands, and we have within us lurking suspicions as to its Divinity, we might read its chapters, and consider its doctrines, and yet experience nothing of its effective energy. Let any one of its wonderful truths strike us with its importance, if a doubt arise as to its Divinity, in a moment its power departs; its influence is gone. Doubts will ever act as repellants. They will encompass the soul, as the dense fogs the earth, and shut out the living light. Should they exist, how are they to be removed? Not by miracle. Not by inaction. Not by merely wishing them away. *Thought* is the only exorcist that can cast out these evil spirits. Nothing can expel doubt, but conviction, nothing produce conviction but evidence, and the relative force of evidence depends on thought. Secondly, reflection is necessary, in order to understand its import. An individual may be satisfied as to its Divinity, and yet have such vague and inaccurate conceptions as to its meaning, as will neutralize altogether its force. The religionizing force of the Gospel is in its *meaning*, and nowhere else. Its facts might be treasured in the memory, and its technical theology understood, and yet its meaning remain a hidden mystery. It is not its form,

but its life—not its letter, but its spirit that saves. "There is a *caro* and a *spiritus*, a flesh and a spirit, a body and a soul, in all the writings of the Scriptures. It is but the flesh and body of Divine truths that are printed upon paper, which many moths of books and libraries do only feed upon;—many walking skeletons of knowledge, that bury and entomb truths in the living sepulchre of their souls, do only converse with;—such as never did anything else but pick at the mere back and rind of truths, and crack the shells of them. But there is a soul and a spirit of Divine truth, that could never yet be congealed into ink, that could never be blotted upon paper;—which, by a secret traduction and conveyance, passeth from one soul into another, being able to dwell nowhere but in a spiritual being, in a living thing; because itself is nothing but "life and spirit."* How is this meaning to be got at? How does the philosopher interpret nature? Is it not by deep and earnest reflection? Thirdly, reflection is requisite, in order to realize the relation of the gospel to us. "Unto you is the word of this salvation sent." Viewed in the abstract it is powerful, but when its aspect upon us is realized, its power is augmented a hundredfold. Trivial things having a relation to us, affect us far more than the greatest realities which have no such connexion. How different is the meaning of the expression, *a* child is dying, to the expression *your* child is dying! The mere relative thought gives the latter an overwhelming force. To believe that there is a Saviour, differs widely from the belief that there is a Saviour for *me*. In the latter only is faith the effective power. To bring the Gospel into this relation to

* Cudworth.

us, to make it speak to our hearts, to appropriate to ourselves its Divine communications—all this must be done. And all this requires reflection. Fourthly, reflection is required to give it an abiding influence over us. We might be satisfied as to its Divinity, we might discover its spiritual meaning, and we might realize its relation to us; but all this might be temporary. It may be as a sudden flash, which expires in a moment; or as the early dew, which goes off in the sun. To make it live in our corrupt hearts, to give it a triumphant power over our errors, our passions, our habits, it must be kept steadily before our view. The soul must ever be filled with it; and this again requires reflection. From all this it follows, that if truth be the instrument by which God regenerates man, reflection is the way, and the only way to religion, on man's part. A man may reason with you, the object of his reasoning may be of the greatest moment to your interest, and his arguments the most true in their elements, the most conclusive in their form, and the most cogent and earnest in their delivery, yet, unless you reflect, they would be powerless as the breathing zephyrs upon the adamantine rock.

That this reflection on religious subjects is the way to religion might be argued, again,

From the obligatoriness of religion. Men are either under a moral obligation to become religious, or they are not. If they are not, their irreligion may be a calamity, but cannot justly be considered a crime. This supposition would reduce the unconverted to a state rather of necessity, than of sin—demanding pity, but affording no pretext for punishment. But every man, however depraved, is bound to become religious. All consciences declare this, the

commands of God imply it, and the whole Bible bears unequivocal testimony to the fact. But if the obligation exist, the power must exist; and that power must be independent—a capacity to become, or not to become, religious. A power which, under all circumstances, will leave the question of religion to be a matter of personal choice. Obligation, in the absence of this power, is a word without meaning—a delusion. But if this power must exist, then the only way to religion must be through reflection, and that for two reasons. First, because reflection is the only power by which we can so modify the force of external appeals, as to prevent them from infringing the principles of freedom. Such is the relation between our animal and mental temperaments, and certain outward objects with which we are constantly brought into contact, that were it not for the agency of thought, which is constantly plying between us and the sensations, we should verily become the creatures of circumstances, not merely swayed by them, but moulded into form by their plastic power. Without thought, outward events would fall upon the sensibilities of our being like sparks on combustibles; but through thought they may be made to descend on these hearts as the genial beams of light upon the fertile soil. Secondly, because man has no *direct* power but over reflection. He has no immediate control over his feelings or faiths. He could no more awaken love, or produce repentance, by a direct effort, than he could create a world. Nor could he either renounce old beliefs, or adopt new ones by volition. These are the works of thought, and over thought he has power. He can think or not think—think upon this

subject or that, in this aspect or another, consecutively or desultorily, profoundly or superficially. This he can do; and herein is his freedom. When I am told that man is the creature of circumstance, I have a triumphant reply at hand, in the fact that nothing need influence him, and nothing should influence him to action, but through the medium of his own thoughts, and over his thinking faculty he has control. Because you are bound to be religious, therefore your becoming so is dependent on reflection.

The same truth might be argued, finally,

From the teachings of the Bible. The Bible teaches it, in the very fact of its existence. The Bible is God reasoning with man, and the very nature of the case requires reflection. It teaches it, in its exhortations. It calls upon us to "consider," to "meditate," to "remember," to "call to mind," and to "think." Indeed the Bible, in its commands, denunciations, narratives and reasonings, promises, and precepts, is full of this doctrine.

These several considerations make, I conceive, most evident the fact, that reflection on religious subjects, with a religious design, is the way to a religious life. I would submit one or two remarks in conclusion.

First, that this doctrine reflects honour on the Spirit of God. It shows that, whilst conversion in all cases must be traced up to his most merciful agency, that non-conversion can never be referred to his sovereignty, but always to the moral thoughtlessness of men. It shows that, in working out the Divine purposes of mediation, no violence is offered to the free and rational nature with which He has

been pleased to endow us. He does not seek to make us good, by first robbing us of our freedom and reducing us to machines. Nor, indeed, could this be done. Moral excellence stands opposed, both to non-action and forced action. It is not an entity ingrafted on human nature, but a state into which human nature is brought; a state of vital activity—free, harmonious, and obedient. It shows, moreover, the admirable aptitude of that system of truth which He has inspired to effect, under his gracious superintendence, the necessary reformation. I am aware of a class of excellent men who will probably view our doctrine in a very different aspect, and regard it as dishonouring to the Spirit. With such we cannot argue now. I would, however, remind them that there are more ways than one to dishonour that Spirit. To take a one-sided view of the Book which He has inspired, to magnify a portion which may coincide with our acquired prejudices, or constitutional idiosyncrasies, to the disparagement or neglect of others; to assume a kind of theological infallibility, and level, with pietistic arrogance, the most solemn charges against men who study the blessed Word as diligently, profoundly, and reverentially as ourselves: to manifest more of the churlish and bigoted spirit of a polemic, than the universal charity of a Christian; to fight with sanctimonious acrimony for the alphabet of one's own gospel, rather than to unfold in a noble bearing, and out-act in generous deeds, the gospel of Jesus, which is *spirit* and *life*—these things, and such as these, are what I conceive dishonour and grieve the Spirit of God.

Secondly, this doctrine indicates the right method to

adopt in endeavouring to make men religious. It is through the Bible that we are to act upon them. No other instrument will do. But how is this Bible to be employed? Scientifically? Will discussion on its geography, philosophy, or even theology, wake up the interest of the unthinking masses? Or controversially? Will men be attracted to it, by seeing it battling with heretics, and turned into an arena of religious conflict? Or sentimentally? Will the common sense of human nature be likely to reverence it, when it is made a toy, to titillate the sensibilities of the more emasculative portion of our species? I am persuaded that for the Bible to answer its great design in our hands, we must wield it in a way different from all these. We must make it *suggestive.* And to make it suggestive, we must deal in its *general principles* and *universal spirit.* Oh! if the Church of God would bring out these, the world would soon feel interested in religion. As the morning sun wakes nature into life and music from the quiet slumber of the night, so the great principles of the Bible, were they properly developed in the teachings and doings of the Church, would everywhere break the religious slumber of mankind, and set souls to an earnest thinking about religion.

Thirdly, this doctrine shows to every irreligious man his first work. Suppose the case of a profligate and undutiful son. He has often wounded the heart, and set at nought the authority of the tenderest of fathers. He advances in filial depravity, until he determines to break away from all domestic inspection and restraint. The day appointed for the carrying out of his purpose arrives. As the first grey

beams of the morning steal into his chamber, he rises and prepares for his journey. All besides are asleep within. His father is unconscious of his plans. With clandestine step, and a thousand mingled emotions, he bids adieu to his birthplace and his home. In a few hours he finds himself on board the vessel which is to bear him to a foreign land. Month after month, through storms and sunshine, he pursues his way. He reaches his destination, and exults in the thought, that now, without restriction, he can revel in all the pleasures his new home can afford. The thought of his lost son fills the father with distress. It disturbs him in his dreams at night. It scares him in the mornings. It spreads a sadness over him through the day. At length he is informed of the far-distant residence of his son, and of his wicked ways. He determines to restore him to a sense of filial obligation, and to his home. And what is the plan? He writes a letter—all that is moving in paternal love is thrown into that letter. Now, on what will its success depend? On its contents? On its being delivered? On its being read? All this is required; but something more is indispensable, to bring out its full force upon his wicked heart. *He must reflect upon it as the expression of a tender father, whose heart, which he had well-nigh broken, still glows with warmest love for him.* Young men, in this picture behold yourselves. You are prodigals. You have violated the love, and forsaken the home of the INFINITE FATHER. Here is a letter which He has addressed to you. In it He says, "Come now, and let us reason together." Oh! what omnipotent reasonings of paternal love are here! Have you ever devoted one day to a con-

centrated reflection upon the contents of this document, in its relation to YOU? If not, you have never yet tried the *only* way to repentance. Go and think thus, and as you muse *the fire will burn.* God's complaint of the world is, its religious thoughtlessness. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not CONSIDER."

PART II.

THE PROGRESS OF BEING.

LECTURE VIII.

THE THEORY OF TRUE PROGRESS.

The importance of the subject. What is not true progress? First: That progress in the accumulation of wealth is not the true progress of man. Secondly: Progress in the attainment of knowledge is not the true progress of man. Thirdly: Progress in social influence is not the true progress of man. Fourthly: Progress in theological zeal is not the true progress of man. Fifthly: The progress of any element in the soul, distinct and separable from it, is not the true progress of man. In what then does true progress consist? In the progress of the soul in strength to fulfil, with happiness to itself, all the great functions of its being. What is the task which The Great Arbiter has allotted to us? It is threefold: appropriation, distribution, and worship. I. True progress is the progress of the soul, in appropriating, with happiness to itself, all external objects to its highest use. II. True progress is the progress of the soul, in distributing, with happiness to itself, the highest blessings to the creation. III. True progress is the progress of the soul, in both appropriating and distributing under an ever-heightening consciousness of the Creator's presence and approval.

THE THEORY OF TRUE PROGRESS.

MAN has a PROGRESSIVE instinct—an instinct everywhere felt, and everywhere at work. Whilst time and circumstances change its objects, nothing can paralyze its power nor satiate its thirst. It runs through all ages, and explains half the phenomena of the world's history. It has been the terror of tyrants, and the inspiration of reformers. In some men it has more force than in others. It is a suppressed wish in the breast of the servile and the timid; it is a burning passion in the heart of the daring, struggling for his rights. It follows us through all the stages of our mortal life. It throbs in the bosom of childhood, and nerves the mind of age. Nothing satisfies it. New attainments only serve to whet its appetite; every new step in the line of advancement adds to its momentum. It stimulates the imagination to paint a bright future, and the memory to gather from the past materials to help us on. It explains the former history of humanity, and predicts the coming. It makes our life a race-course, and ever points us to the "prize." No sooner do we reach one inviting point in the prospect than we are

urged on to another, and thus the goal of to-day is but the starting-point of to-morrow. It

"Makes the coming life-cry always, On!"

Like all the other great powers of our nature, this instinct for progress has been sadly perverted. It has been directed to unworthy ends, and stimulated by unworthy motives. It has either worked under the direction of false light, or, as a blind impulse, in the dark. Men have not paused to reason it into an intelligent and righteous principle—a work which it is both their prerogative and duty to perform in relation to all the innate instincts of their being. Between instincts and actions in the brute there is no intervening medium: impulses pass at once into volition. But between instinct and action in man, Heaven has established the tribunal of intellect and conscience; and he is never justified in obeying the promptings of instinct without the full sanction of both the adjudicating faculties. Man should translate his instincts into moral thoughts before he acts them out; but this, in relation to progress, he has either generally neglected or very inaccurately performed. Whilst all sigh and struggle for advancement, and progress has become the watchword of all, how few have settled the question,—*In what does the true progress of man consist?* This is *the* problem, and it is time that it should be taken up, be well considered, and discussed on grounds that commend themselves to the common philosophy and experience of mankind. Divines, for the most part, have ignored the philosophic aspects of the question, and under such technical heads as "sanctification" and "perseverance," have generally considered progress as the growth of some

germinant entity mysteriously implanted in human nature; while philosophers, going to the other extreme, and taking little or no account of the godly aspects of the question, have represented progress rather as the growth of sciences, faculties, and arts, than the growth of *man*. We want the subject to be discussed from data strong enough to bear all that is *true* in the conclusion of both parties; we want to have it viewed from a position sufficiently high up in the common light of reason and the Bible, to enable us to discern and appreciate all the true points in the horizon both of the philosopher and divine.

Let us give ourselves up, in all sincerity and earnestness, to the question,—*What is the true progress of man?* We say progress of MAN in contradistinction to the progress of "ideas," "graces," "principles," "faculties," or "arts." The many and motley misconceptions surrounding our subject render it necessary that we should begin our answer in a *negative* form. Accordingly we observe—

First: That *progress in the accumulation of wealth is not the true progress of man.* Whilst, theoretically, few, if any, would debate for a moment this position, the millions, *practically*, declare that the increase of riches is true progress. In the popular sense, to "get on" is to get wealth. The extent of a man's property is to the world the measure of his greatness. The question, "What is he worth?" the world answers by counting his sovereigns. The world's "respectable" man is the monied man; its "rising" man he who prospers at his craft. We would not disparage wealth. Perhaps he who is the most ready to decry it would be the most glad to become its possessor. No, we do not underrate it: it is often a great blessing; it is

always a mighty power; and as civilization advances its power increases. Already it commands everything else amongst us. Even genius, the choicest gift of heaven, stands ever at its side, ready to execute its behests. At the bidding of money, genius will investigate the profound, create the beauteous, invent the useful, strike chords to thrill a nation's heart, and write volumes to fascinate the world. Nor do we say that it is not an important help to true progress. It multiplies a thousandfold our facilities for intellectual and spiritual improvement: it can fill our libraries with the choicest productions of genius, produce leisure for reading and study, give us passports to the most elevated and elevating circles of society, and command the help of spirit-guides who both know and tread the upward path. But with all these admissions of the power of wealth, and the important assistance which it can render, we repudiate the idea that the getting of it is true progress. Rather the converse is frequently the fact. The secular advancement of men is often their spiritual downfall. The *man* I have often seen retrograde in the same ratio as the *merchant* has advanced. The hand that gathers wealth not unfrequently throws away that which no wealth can purchase —*moral sensibility*. In the "race for riches," who has not seen the soul go back, with its spiritual sympathies shocked and paralyzed? On every hand we find men who have retired from business with great fortunes, but dwarfed and bruised souls. We often see the millionaire, and ask, Where is the *man* in all the nobler elements of his being?

Secondly: That *progress in the attainment of knowledge is not the true progress of man.* The general notion is, that as knowledge advances man advances;—that because

science is achieving its many conquests, and extending its dominions; that because we travel by steam, and transmit our thoughts by lightning, the world is rising. It would be difficult to over-estimate the value of sound knowledge: it unseals new fountains of pleasure, it widens and brightens the sphere of our being, it invests us with new powers. The accession of every true idea is to the mind like the kindling of a new orb in the heavens: it reveals more space, makes the firmament more glorious, and lends a new light to our path.

Yet advancement in knowledge, though confessedly necessary, is not the true progress of man. A man may know not only the facts of nature, history, and the Bible, but the *rationale* of all these facts, and yet never have taken the first step in the direction of true progress. The father of the inductive philosophy, the author of the History of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," and the "French Encyclopædists," were men of stupendous intellect, of vast and varied knowledge—and yet, was their path such as you would have your children follow? Would you point your offspring to it, and say, "This is the way: walk ye in it?" No! Men may philosophize with the intellect of a Bacon, write with the eloquence of a Gibbon; they may have the lofty imagination of a Byron, or the oratorical thunder of a Mirabeau; and yet be amongst the most morally degraded. The intellectual powers often grow where the moral man is dead, as you sometimes see the luxuriant branch growing upon the lifeless body of an uprooted tree. Intellectual growth is no more the growth of man than the growth of that branch is the growth of the sapless trunk.

Thirdly: That *progress in social influence is not the true progress of man.* A man rises from obscurity to social eminence: he has beaten his name "into the drum of the world's ear," and it is a household word in all civilized lands. Journals chronicle with interest the most trivial incidents of his life, and record his words as if they were the utterances of the infallible. His public appearance is a signal for enthusiastic acclamations. There is a solemn pause at his death. The busy world falters for a moment, and wipes its sentimental tears. Public sympathy rears a monument to hand his memory down to future ages. Well, *he* certainly, it may be said, moved in the line of true progress: to follow him must be honourable: to reach his point must be a worthy destiny. Not necessarily so, my friend. Were the spiritual insight of society so clear and keen as to discern the moral springs of action, and its sympathies so genuine and pure as to award its honours only to the truly great, we might be justified in regarding the popular hero as a noble type of true progress. But this is not the fact. We look at many of the world's departed idols as they figure on the page of history, and we see in the principles that ruled them little to admire, and much to loathe. We discover that "their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips; their mouth has been full of cursing and bitterness, their feet have been swift to shed blood: destruction and misery have been their ways, and the way of peace they did not know: there was no fear of God before their eyes." Many of the illustrious of olden times fall from their lofty pedestals the moment we begin to think as immortal man should think.

Fourthly: That *progress in theological zeal is not the true progress of man.* Suppose a man who has not only a clear and comprehensive theory of biblical truth, but is full of *zeal* for its interest: his doctrines have become ardent feelings, his system is worked into his life. For the promotion of his views, his prayers are most fervent, his advocacy impassioned, his labours indefatigable, his sacrifices great. He will fight to the death for his faith, and compass sea and land to make proselytes. Surely *he* is in the train of true progress: *he* is an "eminent Christian" —a saint far advanced. Not necessarily so. There is a false zeal not only in connection with false doctrines—as in the case of the Hindoo and the Mormonite—but also in connection with truth.

The zeal is false when it has more respect for the *logical forms* of truth than for its *moral principles*—its spirit. When this is the case, it is, first, always *selfish*. Logical forms are the productions of self—the conclusions of the individual reason—while moral principles are divine and universal. *Zeal*, therefore, for the former is but a passion for self-glorification. Secondly: It is always *evanescent*. The principles of truth are eternal; but the logical forms, being the productions of fallible and progressive reason, must, in their very nature, change. They ever vary in different men, sects, and ages. The zeal, consequently, for them must go out. Thirdly: It is always *dissocializing*. The moral principles of truth are the same to all men; but the logical forms being different to different men, *zeal* for them takes the heart away from all who do not subscribe to them, and sets it in anger against all who oppose. Hence the page of history has scarcely any

deeds of cruelty and blood equal to those that have been perpetrated under the influence of theological zeal. The most unsocial and persecuting men, in all churches, are men of dogmatic zeal. Their conduct has been a commentary upon the text, "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

Fifthly: That the *progress of any element in the soul distinct and separable from it, is not the true progress of man.* There are religious writers and speakers who represent the progress of man as consisting in the growth of something added to his nature, rather than in the development of his nature itself. Hence we have books on the subject whose very title propounds this notion; such, for example, as "The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," as if the soul were a flower-bed, and religion some precious seed deposited in its soil. The transposition would be the true idea—namely, *The rise and progress of the soul in religion;* that is, in all that is true, benevolent, and God-like. The notion we are combating—which, perhaps, is the popular one in the Christian world—is not only opposed to our fundamental notions of mind, but to the plain teachings of Scripture. There may be, I grant, one or two figurative expressions which might suggest such representations, but can never justify the teacher who presumes to *explain* God's word in insisting upon their *literal* interpretation. The Scriptures speak of the progress of a holy soul as the progress of "the shining light." It appears on the horizon, gradually ascends to the meridian, "shining brighter and brighter" in every stage. They speak of it as the progress of the racer pressing towards the mark. Every power of the *man* is brought into play. And they

speak of it as the progress of the human body in passing from infancy to manhood. The *whole* body—every fibre, muscle, bone, limb and organ, advance at the same time. But more of this anon. The idea before us is too absurd for formal refutation. It is popular in the Church because thoughtlessness is popular. Who that thinks will maintain for a moment that the true progress of man consists in the growth of some exotic principle or principles?

But if true progress is not in the accumulation of wealth, nor in the attainment of knowledge, nor in the growing of social influence, nor in the increase of theological zeal, nor in the growth of any extraneous element implanted in the soul;—In what does it consist? This is the question, and in answer to it we reply that it consists—IN THE PROGRESS OF THE SOUL IN STRENGTH TO FULFIL, WITH HAPPINESS TO ITSELF, THE GREAT FUNCTIONS OF ITS BEING.

To every living creature God has given its work, a work which he must perform, either happily, or otherwise. He does not intend that any should be idle: to every individual—aye, and to every power—He has assigned a task. Every soul has a work, and strength to perform that work *happily* is its great need. What is that work? What is the task which the great ARBITER has allotted to us? It is threefold—APPROPRIATION, DISTRIBUTION, and WORSHIP. Man has to *gain*, to *give*, and to *adore*. The first belongs to all finite beings by necessity of nature. There is but ONE in the universe that does not receive, and that is GOD. The second is common to all existences, the Eternal included. Every being gives out something, either good or evil, to the creation. And the third belongs to man and

moral intelligences alone. That this threefold work is man's is clear—

First: From the fact that he has faculties exactly fitted for it. All his powers of mind and heart may be comprehended under one of these classes—the *appropriating*, the *distributing*, and the *worshipping*.

Secondly: From the fact that his primary instincts urge him in this direction. You may resolve all human conduct into the instinct of *regard to self*, urging us to appropriate; *regard to others*, urging us to give; and *regard to the Creator*, urging us to worship. These are the primal fountains of human action.

In the farther development of these remarks, we proceed to the illustration of three facts:—

I. *True progress is the progress of the soul in appropriating, with happiness to itself, all external objects to its highest use.* All life grows by the appropriation of the outward to itself. Thus the seed rises into the full-grown plant, and thus the infant reaches the stature and the strength of manhood. It is so with the human mind; it comes into this world the feeblest of all feeble things; it knows nothing, can do nothing. In this state of inanity it continues, while myriads of other creatures come into life, play their part, reach perfection, and pass away. Yet weak as that mind is, it contains *unbounded potentialities*. Omniscience only knows what greatness of intellect, grandeur of character, and splendour of doings, that mind may one day display. Vast fields of thought, broad landscapes of beauty, and mighty forests of noble deeds, slumber within the narrow shell of that little seed.

But how is it to rise? How are these mighty powers to

be brought out, strengthened, and made perfect? The answer is, by its *right appropriation of the external.* When we say the external, we indicate more than the profoundest science has discovered, or the sublimest poetry imagined. We include NATURE, in all her manifold aspects, immeasurable proportions, and fathomless resources—the channel of infinite bountihood, the organ of Almighty impulses, the grand emblem of the Eternal. We include SOCIETY, with all its institutions, books, enterprises, and stirring agencies—the inheritor of the accumulated thoughts and influences of the generations that are gone, the parent and moral moulder of the ages that are to come. We include the BIBLE, that old record of *supernatural* thoughts, histories, achievements, and provisions, which, as a historical fact, has had a mighty influence upon the ideas, doings, and destinies of mankind, and is one of the *greatest powers* in the heart of the civilized world at the present hour. All this we include in the word *external,* and all that is for man's *appropriation.* This stupendous complex system of externalities, embosomed by those bright world-studded and illimitable heavens—aye, and including them—God has given to the human soul as its fitting, unfailing, and necessary means of advancement. I say, *necessary,* for whatever may be the intuitions and faculties of the soul, it *cannot* rise a step without the help of these *outward* systems. They are its schoolmaster: from them it draws its science, morality, and theology. They are the raw materials out of which the infant spirit weaves its seraphic robe; they are the ladder by which it ascends the celestial heights of being. They are to it what earth and air, and all the fructifying influences of nature, are to the seed—that which

quickens the dormant life, and draws out its latent powers into full perfection. Under their influence, the infant spirit, the type or weakness itself, may "flourish" in the spiritual universe "like the palm-tree," and "grow like a cedar in Lebanon." These outward things come to our souls like "the great sheet" descending from Heaven in Peter's trance. The "clean and the unclean" are for our use, and the Divine voice which comes with them all is, "Rise, kill, and eat"—transmute everything into food. All things outward are for things within. Matter is for mind. Souls grow as plants grow, by appropriating things *ab extra* to their use; and all things *ab extra*, even the most distant star that "skirts the outer line of space," are for souls.

> "For us the winds do blow,
> The earth rests, heaven moves, and fountains flow.
> Nothing we see, but means our good,
> As our *delight*, or as our *treasure*;
> The whole is either, our cupboard of food,
> Or cabinet of *pleasure*.
>
> "The stars have us to bed;
> Night draws the curtain, which the sun withdraws;
> Music and light attend our head.
> All things unto our flesh are kind
> In their descent and being; to our *mind*,
> In their *ascent* and *cause*.
>
> "More servants wait on man,
> Then he'll take notice of: in every path
> He treads down that which doth befriend him,
> When sickness makes him pale and wan.
> Oh, mighty love! man is one world, and hath
> Another to attend him."—HERBERT.

But how is this *appropriation* to be made? How is this outward universe to promote the growth of our souls?

Not without our willing and earnest effort. Put the acorn into a congenial soil, and external nature, by a *necessity*, will draw all the elements of vitality from its "milky veins," and elaborate them into majestic forests. The seed has no resisting force; it is passive in the plastic hand of nature. But it is not so with mind; *it* has a choice in the matter. No outward force, however mighty, can either injure or benefit, stunt or develop, the soul, without its consent. The outward universe, though organized for its service, may become its ruin. In many instances, instead of souls *using it* to their own growth and grandeur, *it* "uses them up;"—deadens their sensibilities, benumbs their energies, moves them as mere wheels in its triumphal car. That men are, in numerous instances, "the creatures of circumstances" is a *fact*, that they are so by *necessity* is a *falsehood*.

To turn the outward, then, to our good, something must be done. What is it?

First: *There must be investigation.* Brutes, without study, can derive from the outward all that is necessary to the wants and purposes of their being; their instincts guide them to the most congenial climates and suitable food. They need not investigate; the light of instinct is enough to help them to the use of as much of the outward as they require. Nature weaves their clothing, arms them with implements of defence and attack, ornaments them with beauty, and often gives them means of transit swifter than steam. Not so with man: before nature will do much for him, he must study her. He must *know* her provisions before he can use them, her elements before he can convert them to his wants, her forces before he can bridle them

to his will. How little will nature do, even *corporeally*, for man without study! It is through knowledge he derives from her his gardens, his orchards, his fields of waving corn, his garments to wear, houses to dwell in, vessels to bear him over the deep, and all the physical comforts that distinguish civilized life. But *mentally*, the whole system of *external* things will be utterly useless without study. Of what avail to him are the glowing pages of nature, the teeming ideas of society, or the supernatural disclosures of the Bible, if he think not? Are they not to him like a book in the hands of one who cannot read? Do not their divine influences fall on his spirit as showers on the sandy desert? Would you get from the external influences to quicken and strengthen your mental powers? Then you must idealize it, decipher its hieroglyphics, interpret its parables, and generalize its facts. It is only as you transmute the outward universe into *ideas*, that it can become of any real service to you as an intelligent and moral being. Turn the earth into geology, and the smallest fossil will become your mental helper: throw the heavens into astronomy, and the most distant star will do you good.

Secondly: *There must also be application*, before the outward can be appropriated to our use. Ideas, however great, unless they are applied to some use, are but phantoms of the brain. There is a threefold application which man makes of the ideas he obtains from the outward,—namely, *scientific*, *artistic*, and *moral*. In the first, they are used to construct theoretical systems. The scattered ideas are taken up and built into a temple, where the intellect sits in calm majesty to explain everything. All is translated into a "Cyclopedia." In the second, the

ideas are taken down from the upper realm of abstract theories, and made to assume some tangible form. The steam is put into the locomotive, and the electric fluid is made to run along the wire. Ideas are turned to a practical account; they clothe themselves in sinews of iron to do man's work; they borrow wings of lightning to convey his thoughts. What, in sooth, are all the useful arts, that bless and adorn civilized life, but the *practical application of scientific ideas* to man's daily use? Our common conveniences were once ideas floating in the brain of solitary thinkers. In the third application—namely, the *moral*—the ideas derived from nature, society, and the Bible, are applied to the real good of the *soul.* They are made "ministering spirits" to the inner heart—the *man.* They refine his moral sensibilities; they brighten his consciousness of duty and God; they widen his sympathies, enfranchise and invigorate his will. They become part of himself, by growing into principles and becoming habits. Their right application to the heart is the formation of a *holy character.*

Now, I wish distinctly to affirm that this MORAL application of the outward is the *all-important* one, and that the other two are only valuable as they conduce to this. I have two incontrovertible facts to sustain this position. One is, that it is the only application that affects the *fundamental* conditions of human happiness. What are these? *Moral moods.* Man's happiness does not spring *directly* from his ideas, however great and luminous those ideas may be, nor from those physical blessings which all the arts of a high civilization put within his reach, but from the *moral temper* of the soul. Let that temper be suspicious, irascible,

miserly, envious, and distrustful of God, and though he has the famed intelligence of a Humboldt, or the wealth of a Crœsus, he must be unhappy. In the moral temper the *man* lives. If that atmosphere be unhealthy, *he* will never know the joyous elasticity of health; if it be cloudy, *he* will never be entranced with bright visions; if it be riven with storms, *he* will never enjoy that peace of mind "which passeth all understanding." Where there are right moral moods, whatever else be absent, there is felicity. Where these are not, whatever else be present, happiness is not there.

The other fact in support of my position is, that this moral application of the outward is the only application that *enriches* our *being*. When we apply the outward to the formation of scientific theories, we only get our intellect enriched; and when we apply it to physical arts, our bodies only are blessed; but when we apply it to the formation of *holy principles* and *habits* of soul, we *ourselves* are enriched, and that for ever. Many, perhaps, of the sciences, and certainly all the arts, which we gather from the external universe we shall leave behind at death, but the principles and habits we form, having become part of ourselves, we shall carry with us. The *moral* application of the outward, then, is the all-important one. In all our getting, we should seek to get this.

Here, then, is the first branch of true progress: it is in the happy appropriation of the outward, the interpretation of its meaning, the subordination of its forces, the application of all its moral ideas to the heart. What a field for advancement is this? Here is a work for ages beyond our calculation. How little of this world have we yet brought

into true use? We have not discovered a millionth part of the elements therein which are available for blessing. But what is this world to the universe? What is a solitary blade to the wide-spread landscape? What is a grain of sand to the ocean's shore? Vast as that universe is, it is all for the use of moral mind; and to *advance is to prosper in the great work of appropriation.* We say, then, in relation to appropriation, your work is to *translate the external into ideas, and turn the ideas into moral habits.*

II. *True progress is the progress of the soul in distributing, with happiness to itself, the highest blessings to the creation.* There are three considerations which show that distribution is a *primary function* of the soul.

First: *The analogy of nature indicates it.* There is nothing made for itself—nothing whose powers and influences are entirely circumscribed to self. Whatever a creature receives it gives out, with the modification and increase of its own force. The clouds borrow water of the ocean, but they pour it forth again in refreshing showers upon the thirsty hills, which, in their turn send them amongst the valleys. Planets borrow light of their centres, and forthwith fling their rays abroad upon the dark regions of space through which they roll. The tree borrows from every part of the world in order to build up itself; but it gives out, in return, beauty, fragrance, and fruit. Thus all things give what they appropriate. The material is but the emblem of the spiritual; and thus all nature typifies man's distributive function. Truly, he who appropriates and gives not is an anomaly in the universe. A miser is a monster whom no heart can love.

Secondly: *The soul's instincts suggest it.* "There are,"

says Bishop Butler,* "as real, and the same kind of indications in nature that we are made for society, and to do good to our fellow-creatures, as that we were intended to take care of our own life, and health, and private good; and that the same objections lie against one of these assertions as against the other." Whilst the instinct of *self-love* urges to appropriation, that of *social benevolence* demands distribution. Indeed, the latter appears to me intended to be the *reigning* instinct. In responsible life it should be the stimulus and sovereign of the former. Men should get *in order* to give—accumulate *in order* to communicate. I say *responsible* life, for during the infant stage of life—the stage of non-accountability—the principle of self-love is necessarily supreme. As the mind, however, expands, and the claims of mankind engage its attention, this instinct, where the development is true, bows to the authority of social benevolence.

Thirdly: Another fact in proof of this is, that *the soul has a sphere for it.* Were all souls identical in capacity and circumstances, would there be scope for the displays of benevolence? No. All being equal in every point, each would be independent of others;—there could be neither benefactor nor beneficiary. But such is not the order of creation: a boundless variety characterizes all the works of the Almighty. No two spirits, perhaps, throughout the intelligent universe are exactly alike: the one has what its neighbour requires, and thus to all there is a field for distribution. Nor is there any reason to expect that a period will occur, through the interminable future, when any mind shall be relieved from the claims of benevolence. Into

* See Butler's "First Sermon on Human Nature."

whatever world we are introduced, we shall meet with some beings who will require our help, and some, too, who will be able to minister to our advancement.

Now, true progress is, as we have said, the progress of the soul, in distributing the *highest blessings, with happiness to itself.* What are the highest blessings? *Spiritual thoughts.* Ideas that will stimulate to duty, and nerve for nobler deeds; that will shed new light on being, and present the Eternal to the mind under aspects yet more lovely; that will guide to loftier walks of existence; that will touch new chords, develop new powers of being, awaken new hopes, and kindle higher aspirations—these I call the highest blessings. No created benefactor has anything higher to give than such thoughts.

It would be easy to show that, even for the promotion of man's material good, spiritual blessings are indispensable. More than half the physical woes of this world would be removed if men had truer notions of life and higher moral qualities. The institutions that oppress, the habits that impoverish, and engender disease, arise from the state of the soul. The great Upas of physical woe, whose branches overshadow the world, has its roots in the moral heart, and from the fountains of spiritual depravement derives its nutriment and support. In proportion, therefore, as you improve the spiritual state of a people, you will improve their physical condition. In the spirit-world, nothing but spiritual blessings will be required, and the great work of holy souls will be to distribute these high benefactions.

But we said that the true progress of the soul was not merely distributing the highest blessings, but distributing

these blessings with *happiness to itself;* and in order to do this, three things seem necessary.

First: To distribute these spiritual gifts with happiness to ourselves, we must do it *individually.* By this, I mean that what we give out must be our own productions—things that would have had no existence in the universe had we not been—things that we have wrought out of our own essence—the joint produce of a sweating brain and an earnest heart. We must be the well-spring, not the mere channel—the creators, not the mere vendors—of the thoughts we communicate. *Self-respect* and *conscience* forbid happiness to the man who, in his distributive function, deals in wares which he has pilfered, and has not purchased by the honest outlay of his own faculties. I believe that the great Father has given to every mind a power to produce a something which no other mind can—to look upon a truth in some aspect, and to invest it with some feature of attraction peculiar to itself. Every mind, as every seed, can produce some new thing in the world; it has some "gift" within it peculiar to itself. To work out rightly this peculiar gift is at once its mission and happiness. They must ever be unhappy in their work who are the mere echoes f other men—who spend their mental existence in the business of parroting.

Secondly: To be happy in this distributive operation there must be *cordiality.* In services rendered to others—either as a matter of expediency, or from a mere sense of duty—there can be no spiritual pleasure. In such a case, the man acts survilely and mechanically, not regally and free. The members move, but the soul moves not. To be blessed *in* our deed, the service must be the natural out-

goings of the benevolent affections. Ah! when the heart is in the work every stroke awakens joy. The labour of love is the music of life. The soul that goes out in true benevolent service soars into the sunshine of being, and is borne onward and upward by the spirit of the universe—the inspiration of God!

Thirdly: *Disinterestedness* is another condition of a happy distributive operation. It is only so far as we cease to be influenced by ulterior views, and are in love with the work itself, that we can be happy. Giving must not be regarded as a *sacrifice* made for some future good, but as the good itself; labour not as a means to a higher end, but as the highest end of all. Who, then, is the happy distributor? Not the man that gives what he has not produced;—he is but the mere vehicle of that which would have been in the world had he never had existence. Self-respect proscribes his happiness. Not the man who administers even what he has produced without a thorough heartiness of sympathy; for in him only the mechanical faculties have been brought into play. The deep fountains of love—the "well of life"—have never been unsealed within him. Not the man who, although his heart may be in the work, distributes with the hope of a remunerative return. He moves within the circle of selfishness—a circle through which that "stream" never rolls "which makes glad the city of God." No; he only is happy in the great work of distribution who gives out to the universe, with thorough cordiality and disinterestedness, the most precious results of his own *individual* effort—wealth dug from the depths of his own nature—pearls gathered from the abysses of his own soul.

Here, then, is the second branch of true progress. The first is getting, this is giving—giving the highest blessings to the universe, for ever, with happiness to ourselves. To advance is to prosper as happy "ministering spirits" to the creation. What a work is this! It is a higher kind of activity than the former. God never acquires, but always gives. We attach no idea of exhaustion to this *perpetual* distribution. The spiritual wealth of souls is unbounded. Unlike material property, it accumulates by impartation. True, we have heard of ministers and writers who have exhausted their stores, and who either repeat themselves, or sink into silence; but the exhaustion was not the exhaustion of their own thoughts, but of the little stock which they had gathered from other men. The man who learns to draw from his own soul opens up fathomless deeps within. The law of mind is, that it "scattereth and yet increaseth." Did "Paradise Lost" exhaust the mind-stores of Milton? I think not. It left his mind, I imagine, in possession of materials from which, had there been time, he could have wrought other creations, before whose effulgence the brightest of his past productions would have paled their light. Nothing is so fecund as thought; one often begets myriads. Every true idea is a key to unlock new treasures. It is to the soul as the opening of a gate into a more magnificent garden, or the unsealing of a deeper and a clearer well, or the discovery of a new and richer mine of wealth.

III. *True progress is the progress of the soul in both appropriating and distributing, under an ever-heightening consciousness of the Creator's presence and approval.* Neither of the two former instincts to which we have referred—that of self

or society—is more real, deep, or universal, than the Divine instinct. All men, in all periods, circumstances and places, have developed both their intuitive belief in the supernatural and Divine, and the propensity to worship. This religious element is the ultimate fact in our spiritual constitution: it is the fountain-head of all religions. It has reared temples for the world, transformed men into priests, and wood and stone into gods. It is the breath of prayer, the song of thanksgiving, the soul of worship, through all lands and ages. To *enjoy the approbation* of the Deity is the grand desideratum of life. What prayers have been offered—what pilgrimages have been undertaken—what sacrifices have been made—what tortures have been endured—what oceans of blood have been shed, in order to obtain this!

Now, on the assumption that God exists, the highest reason dictates that his approbation is the chief good; that —whatever else we may be, possess, or do—if we have not the "Well done" of the Supreme One we cannot be happy, nor can we advance rightly. We may *appropriate*, but the elements which we gather without His approbation will fail of doing us true service. They will, like the putrid masses in the valley of Hinnom, but generate the gnawing worm, and feed the scorching fire. Let a sense of God's disfavour rest upon the spirit, and your stores of knowledge will but serve to aggravate your torment. The more a wicked spirit has gained, the more he has to distress him. His ideas will shape themselves into fiends, and gnash their teeth at him. And we may not only appropriate, but distribute also; but in giving we shall neither be happy nor useful. Consciousness of Divine approbation should

mingle with every fresh blessing we acquire, and every gift we bestow, if we would move on in the glorious march of true progress. God's existence is the greatest fact in the universe—the fact that gives meaning and worth to all other facts; and the religious element is the greatest fact in man's nature: it is the *substratum* of his being. Nothing, therefore, that is not done by him *religiously* can be wisely, righteously, or happily done. The philosophy of our nature echoes and enforces the duty of doing all we do, in word or deed, "to the glory of God."

This last element of progress—namely, the ever-heightening consciousness of Divine approbation—transcends the other two, inasmuch as it involves them. It is only, as will appear hereafter, as this consciousness is felt that the spirit can succeed, either in the great work of appropriation or distribution. This is the spirit of advancement. As the instinct of self-love must bow to the social, so the social must bow to the religious; and thus the sentiment of God must be the *reigning* power of the soul. Indeed, without this consciousness, there is nothing rightly seen or done by man.

> "Without God all things are in tunnel darkness—
> Let there be God, and all are sun—all God!"

This sentiment takes the soul behind the painted scenes of nature, and gives her an insight into the heart of things; conducts her through all the courts of the great external temple; withdraws the mystic vail, and leads her straight into the Holy of Holies, where the law of laws is enshrined, and the light of lights sheds its glory on the whole sphere of being.

I have thus given a brief sketch of my theory of progress.

I think it is true. It comprehends, at any rate, all that is true in all the other views I have seen. Progress involves the growth of the faculties, the acquisition of knowledge, the advancement of holiness, the increase of happiness, and the promotion of usefulness. It supplies man with objects for all his native desires, and spheres of action for all his faculties.

May this progress be thine, my friend! See the external systems around and about thee stretching away into the Infinite! Be the *student* in relation to them: read their Divine pages, and con their lessons. Be the *hero* in relation to them: "subdue" their forces to thy will, and "have dominion" not only "over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth," but over every element and power. What thou gettest from all, *give*—give individually, cordially, and disinterestedly; and in every act of thy getting and giving may the love of God be thine inspiration—His will thy rule—His glory thine end!

> "God and his great idea, the universe,
> Are over and above us,"

says the poet; and we say more:—

> God and his everlasting laws
> Are deeply rooted in us.

LECTURE IX.

THE MASTER IMPULSE OF TRUE PROGRESS.

Supreme sympathy with God is the master impulse to true progress. Proof. I. Any master impulse to render man happy in the discharge of the functions of his being must have force enough to exclude all disturbing feelings. II. Any master impulse to render man happy in the discharge of the functions of his being must have the concurrence of the conscience. III. That any master impulse to render man happy in the discharge of the functions of his being must give him a soul-absorbing interest in his work. IV. That any master impulse to render man happy in the discharge of his functions must afford him scope for the gratification of all his desires, and the development of all his powers.

THE MASTER IMPULSE OF TRUE PROGRESS.

WE have already indicated the theory of true progress. Our doctrine is, that it *is the progress of the soul in* STRENGTH* *to fulfil, with happiness to itself, the great functions of its being.* These functions we consider to be *appropriation, distribution* and *worship.* In a strictly philosophical arrangement, the last might have been included in the first and second, inasmuch as there could not be, from the constitution of things, either a *happy* appropriation or distribution, where the sentiment of worship was not the all-permeating element and ever-inspiring impulse. Hence, in our third general division, we have been more explicit and full in our definition of true progress, which we have represented as the progress of the soul in appropriating and distributing, under an ever-heightening consciousness of the Creator's presence and approval.

It will be seen that this theory involves the existence of several things as the *necessary* conditions of true progress. First: There must be an *external* universe, otherwise there can be nothing to appropriate. Secondly: There must be

* "They go from strength to strength."—Psa. lxxxiv. 7.

existences who *can* and *will* receive that which we are capable of giving; otherwise there can be no distribution. Thirdly: There must be a BEING as the object of our supreme reverence and love—a GOD; otherwise there can be no worship. Fourthly: There must be capacities in the soul fitted for all these operations, for without power there is no action. And, Fifthly: There must be some *impulse* competent, rightly and effectively, to stimulate and guide these capacities in the work; for the mental faculties, however great their capabilities, will never act without the pressure of motive, and never act rightly without the pressure of a good motive. Here, then, are five *necessary* conditions of true progress. Do these conditions exist? And is man in possession of them? Although each of the first four has been logically denied by a few, they are intuitively believed in by all. It would be folly in us not to assume them here as axiomatic facts. No argument can deepen the universal *consciousness* that there is an external universe; that there are beings we can serve; that there is a God; and that man has a capacity to *get*, *give*, and *adore*.

The fifth is the only *necessary* condition which we open to discussion. Is there an impulse in human nature suited to set the soul rightly in the line of true progress? If so, what is it? This is the question now; and in dealing with it, we shall state a few facts in our mental history, which will not only supply an answer, but introduce us at the same time to the position which we are anxious to establish.

First: *That man is the subject of numerous native sympathies.* He seems to have constitutional affinities for all the objects to which he is related, and he appears to be related to all

things. "He is in little, all the sphere." He is related to *matter*, and he has sensuous sympathies. He has an inward craving for whatever quality matter has to excite pleasurable feelings. The sweet odour which goes out from its heart, the food which its combined elements elaborate, the countless forms of beauty and grandeur which it assumes, the tidal flow of music it pours forth on its fields of air,—whatever, in fact, matter has to touch any nerve with pleasure, the soul is *naturally* inclined to. Man is related to *society*, and has social sympathies. He has a desire for contact and intercourse with kindred natures. He *craves* to receive from man his deepest thoughts and feelings, and to reciprocate them. As well might the tree live and thrive without soil at its roots, as the soul in constant isolation from kindred natures. He is related to *truth*, and has intellectual sympathies. By truth we mean the great principles that explain the origin of things, the meaning of existence; the reasons of actions, the foundations of duty. Universal man believes in the existence of such principles. His sympathies point to these, and stir his intellect to enquire after them. Man is related to *God*, and has religious sympathies. There is an instinctive inclination in all hearts towards a Being beyond the ken of sense and the reach of thought—the transcendant ONE. Thus we have sympathies which, like living tendrils of the heart, shoot forth, and vitally connect us with the universe and God. These are the operative forces in humanity. They are the springs in the mental machine: they set all the faculties in motion.

Secondly: *That amongst his numerous sympathies there is some one ever supreme.* The mind has only one sovereign at

a time;—it cannot "serve two masters." Its monarch is evermore its *strongest* sympathy. All its faculties and feelings are tributary to this. This ruling impulse is, in scriptural language, the "*heart*" of the man. It pulsates through every vein of his soul, it fashions his character, it determines his destiny;—it is his inner life. If *sensuousness* be the dominant impulse, then the higher powers of our nature are employed to minister to the appetite, and to please the senses, and the man becomes either a pampered animal or a mammon devotee, or both. If *socialness* be the ascendant impulse, the man is a mere *creature* of influence. He is no longer a barque that can battle with the tempest, and hold on its course, but a mere straw borne away before the stream. He loses at once his sense of individual responsibility, and his power of individual action. He is rather an echo than a voice—a limb than a man. If *intellectualness* gain the throne, the man disconnects himself from the real living world, and becomes a cold, abstract, dreamy idealist, cradling himself in the clouds, while there are fields to be cultivated and seeds to be sown. If *godliness* get the sway, then the man is complete in the free and healthy play of all his powers, and the full enjoyment of all the relations of his being.

Thirdly: *That no impulse should ever get supremacy in man but godliness.*

Reason teaches this. Who that admits the existence of a Being, who alone made, sustains, and owns the universe, can avoid the conclusion that the *supreme* sympathy of all souls belongs to Him? That the greatest Being should have the most *reverence;* the greatest Benefactor the most *gratitude;* the greatest excellence the most *esteem;* the

greatest benevolence the fullest complacency, and the most earnest *concurrence* of soul;—seem to me moral axioms against which there can be no reasoning. Intellect, in its endeavours to resist these truths, is powerless as a feeble worm before the dashing surges of a mountain torrent. Deny a God, and you may maintain that the soul's supreme sympathy may be given to something else; but with the admission of a God follows the conclusion, by a resistless law of mind, that supreme sympathy is HIS due.

The Bible inculcates this. The great duty which the Scriptures enforce, and which Christ came in order to help us to fulfil, is but the loud echo of this universal voice of reason. The sentiment which rings through every page of inspiration is "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*" What is Christianity but a translation of this primitive moral belief of humanity, with explanatory notes, suggestions, and helps?

True progress demands this supreme sympathy;—we say *supreme* with intensest emphasis. *Mere* sympathy with God is not religion. All minds have this. There is something in nature—in the munificent goodness that breathes through every part of it, in the fascinating beauty that adorns it, in the mystic air of grandeur that surrounds it—that must ever awaken in the mind some sympathy with the ABSOLUTE ONE. The ancients felt divinity in every part of the world; in every flower, and tree, and waving field; in shining rays, in running fountains, and in breathing winds. It is human to feel this. But this is not godliness. The sympathy becomes godliness *only* when it becomes *supreme:* when it gets the entire mastery of the soul:

presses every faculty into its service, transforms the man, makes God the ALL-IN-ALL of the soul; when, like the author of our text,* the man looks abroad upon his earthly possessions, upon his friends, upon the world, the heavens, the universe, and says, "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? And there is none upon the earth that I desire beside Thee." This *supreme* sympathy with God is godliness, and nothing else is. And our doctrine is, *that this is the necessary impulse of true progress;*—that there is no other conceivable feeling that can, in the nature of the case, stimulate and guide the soul in her onward march.

Our proof is, that it is the only master impulse that can yield happiness to the soul in its appropriating and distributing functions. Whilst the seeking of one's own happiness as an end would be unvirtuous in principle, and therefore fruitless in effort, the possession of *real* happiness, in the case of a moral creature, is the highest proof that he is right in his character and relations; for the structure of the universe, the intuitions of the soul, the revelations of the Bible,—all declare that GOD IS LOVE; and the ultimate law of love is the diffusion of happiness. The voice of the Creator to his creatures, in all the departments of His works and manifestations, is—BE HAPPY. This is the will of the Creator; this is the law of the universe. We are warranted, therefore, in inferring that a course that cannot yield happiness cannot be one of true progress. Happiness is a fundamental element in all real human advancement. Let a man appropriate and distribute to the greatest conceivable extent, and if he is not *happy* he has not advanced. We go on, therefore, to observe:—

* Psa. lxxiii. 25.

I. *That any master impulse, to render man happy in the discharge of the functions of his being, must have force enough to exclude all disturbing feelings.* There are many emotions which heave the spirit into agitations like the "troubled sea." There is *envy*, a feeling of pain, occasioned by the success of a rival. I remember reading somewhere, in a Grecian story, of a man who killed himself through envy. His fellow-citizens had reared a statue to one of their number, who was a celebrated victor in the public games. So strong was the feeling of envy which this excited in the breast of one of the hero's rivals, that he went forth every night, in order, if possible, to destroy that monument. After repeated efforts he moved it from its pedestal; it fell, and in its fall it crushed him. This was an act unintentionally symbolic, showing the suicidal action of envy on the soul. It is ever an element of misery—a burning coal, which "comes hissing hot from hell." There is *ambition*, which destroys the pleasures of the present in ardent aspirations after an imaginative future. There is *avarice*, which isolates man from the great universe and the holy God, deadens the sensibilities to the highest joys, and shuts the soul up in its own dark self, the victim of a thousand miserable suspicions, and the subject of attributes that every generous heart must loathe. There is *fear*—fear of man, fear of death, fear of the future, fear of God. Under its influence every power of the soul trembles, as the sere leaf in the wind. It always "hath torment." There is *remorse*, which not only turns God and his creation against us, but turns us against ourselves—makes the soul act like the serpent which stings itself to death. "Think not," says Cicero, "that guilt requires the burning

torches of the Furies to agitate and torment it. Frauds, crimes, remembrances of the past, terrors of the future,—these are the domestic furies that are ever present to the mind of the impious."

These are feelings which ever carry with them misery to the soul. Where these are there can be no happiness; they are the elements of hell. What is wanted, therefore, to secure to man happiness in his work, is some master impulse that shall exclude these miserable feelings from the heart, and bolt the door for ever against them; that shall, like "the strong man armed," come in, and keep the "palace" and the "goods in peace."

What is that impulse? We only know of one, and that is SUPREME SYMPATHY WITH GOD. Neither envy, ambition, avarice, fear, remorse, nor any of this wretched tribe, can live on the soil, or breathe the air, of a heart under the ruling influence of Divine love. Love fills the soul with bliss, as the noontide sun fills the hemisphere with light.

II. *That any master impulse, to render man happy in the discharge of the functions of his being, must have the concurrence of the conscience.* There is a *sense* of right in humanity; it speaks in all languages—it vibrates in all acts. Though called by different names, and measured by different standards, it is one in *essence* everywhere. It is something which, in the heart of the savage as well as the sage, will echo to the sound of rectitude from without. It is something that gives to humanity a deeper interest in *right than in gain.* "Themistocles proposed to the Athenians to burn the fleets of the allies that were in the ports of Athens, and thus secure to themselves the supremacy.

'The project is useful,' said Aristides, 'but it is unjust'; —and on account of this simple speech, the Athenians renounced an advantage that must be purchased by an injustice." * What powerful element did Aristides thus rouse in the common heart of Athens, so as to induce her people to forego this great *advantage?* CONSCIENCE. And to use the language of M'Cosh—the poet, the tragedian, the novelist—"all address themselves to this power, and seek to call forth our moral emotions by the description or exhibition of scenes in which tempted chastity stands, and suffering virtue is triumphant, and patriotism burns with a flame all the brighter because of the surrounding darkness and apostacy; or changing the scene, they would rouse our feelings of indignation, and terror, and pity, by the pictures of powerful villany and deceit, spreading misery among the innocent and the helpless."

Now, this conscience we must have ever on our side before we can be happy in any operation, and that for the following reasons:—

First: *Because where this is not the case, the greatest part of our nature is not gratified.* There are pleasures—pleasures of sense, of social intercourse, of intellectual reverie, of successful secular enterprises—experienced, where conscience is incarcerated in the cell of worldliness, or buried in the grave of lusts; where it is muffled and fettered—"carnal, sold under sin." But I call not these pleasures *human* happiness. The conscience is the "inner man" —the moral *person*—the *I;* and if its sensibilities are not gratified, its cravings not supplied; if its eyes are

* See M. V. Cousin on "The True, the Beautiful, and the Good": a book which every young man should read.

closed to the enrapturing "beauties of holiness," and its ear to the exquisite harmonies of moral goodness; tell me not that the *man* is happy. The other reason why a man cannot be happy in any engagement where he has not the concurrence of his conscience is—

Secondly: *Because where its concurrence is not, its opposition is to be expected, and that is misery.* It will not always be dumb and manacled. Eternal rectitude requires a resurrection of dead consciences. All that are in their graves must hear the voice of moral law one day, and come forth to judgment. Such a resurrection every sin-convicted soul has felt. The guilty conscience often now breaks its fetters as Samson the "green withs"—comes forth in terrible fury. It opens its mouth, and speaks things of utmost horror. It gives a terrible form and a horrible voice to everything beautiful and musical without. It is said of Bessus, a native of Pelonia, in Greece:—Being one day seen by his neighbours pulling down some birds' nests, and passionately destroying the young, they severely reproved him for his ill-nature and cruelty to those little innocent creatures that seemed to court his protection. He replied that their notes were to him insufferable, as they never ceased twitting of the murder of his father. The music of the sweet songsters of the grove are as the shrieks of hell to a guilty conscience startled from its grave. Let Byron describe its anguish, for who felt it more than he?

"The mind that broods o'er guilty woes
Is like the scorpion girt by fire;
In circle narrowing as it glows,
The flames around their captive close,

Till inly searched by thousand throes.
And maddening in her ire,
One sad and sole relief she knows,
The sting she nourished for her foes:
Whose venom never yet was vain,
Gives but one pang and cures all pain,
And darts into her desperate brain:
So do the dark in soul expire,
Or live like Scorpion girt by fire.
So writhes the mind Remorse has riven,
Unfit for earth, undoomed for Heaven,
Darkness above, despair beneath,
Around it flame, within it death."

Now, under what governing impulse must you act to get the concurrence of this mighty faculty — CONSCIENCE? Will conscience go with you if you act under the master direction of the sensuous, the social, or the intellectual sympathy? No! it will not give its consent to this; it will sanction no authority in the soul as *supreme*, but LOVE TO GOD. It cannot enter into a compromise. Conscience must have supreme love to God on the throne, or it will torment the soul for ever.

III. *That any master impulse, to render man happy in the discharge of the functions of his being, must give him a soul-absorbing interest in his work.* In no engagement can man find happiness unless his *heart* be in it. He who undertakes an enterprise, and works it out rather for the sake of *results* than itself, must ever feel his labours more irksome than pleasing. There will be want of freedom, flow, and force of heart. As the lark gets music on the wing, and sings more sweetly as its little pinions flutter in the breeze, so man is only happy as his energies are engaged in an occupation which engrosses the vital sympathies of his being.

What master impulse can give the soul this interest in the work of appropriation and distribution? SUPREME LOVE TO GOD can do it, and nothing else. Let a man love God supremely, and how delightful will the work of *appropriation* be to him! How happy will he be in all his efforts to get the truth! Every avenue of the loving soul, as we have elsewhere expressed it, is open to the *Absolute One.* He is seen in everything, and all things are seen in Him. All the faculties are free from the benumbing influence of selfishness, and are instinct with new life. When Divine love, like the sun, rises on the heart, it penetrates that murky atmosphere of sensual passion, in which the spiritual energies wax languid and faint. The sky is clear, and a healthful breeze stirs through all. What a charm have nature and the Bible for such a man! A father dies, and leaves behind him a sorrowing son; in a few days after the funeral an exquisite painting is discovered, executed by him whose hand is cold in death; it is presented to the weeping son by one who takes the opportunity of exhorting him to study the product of the taste and skill of his departed sire. How would that son regard such an appeal? Would it not grate on his holiest feelings, and be felt as a rude intrusion, and a heartless insult? The language of the son's heart to the indecorous speaker would be, "Begone! thy speech is an offence to me. It is enough to know that it is my father's work. My filial instinct will give me a living interest in every form, and shade, and stroke." Or suppose, instead of a painting, a book: an address to study that volume, would be felt, not merely as unnecessary and unbecoming, but a grievous impertinence. Filial love would say, "I require no argument to induce me

to read these pages; they are the effusions of one to whom my soul is linked in tenderest ties. I shall go over and over every sentence, and give a mystic meaning to every word." What filial love would prompt in relation to that painting or to that book, supreme love to God would prompt in relation to the UNIVERSE and the BIBLE.

Had we this love—the love which Christ had—we should feel an exhortation to study nature an unwarrantable intrusion. Our supreme attachment to the Infinite Architect would give us an interest in every part of the building, and impel us to inspect it as the highest delight of the heart; and when men urged on us the study of the Scriptures, and mapped out how much we should read on one portion of the day, and how much on another, we should scarcely tolerate their needless talk. Nature and the Bible would be the delight of our hearts, and from these we should draw the elements of eternal truth, with more than the eagerness and zest with which the babe drinks nutriment from its mother's breast.

And in the department of *distribution*, too, there would be the same heart-interest. In the light of this supreme affection, man looks greater in our eyes, and becomes thrice dear to our natures. "If a man love God, he will love his brother also." By the influence of this affection, moreover, selfishness is destroyed, and benevolence, like a fathomless and ever-flowing fountain, is opened up in the soul, and the man feels that "it is *more blessed to give than to receive.*"

IV. *That any master impulse, to render man happy in the discharge of his functions, must afford him scope for the gratification of all his desires, and the development of all his powers.*

Various are the desires implanted in human nature, and the goodness of the Creator *binds* us to conclude that they were intended to be gratified. An unsupplied appetency is pain: it gnaws, and sometimes burns. To destroy a *natural* desire is to destroy an organ of happiness, and to sin against our constitution and our God is to snap asunder one of the ties that link us to the universe—to shatter one of the vehicles of Divine benevolence. Or to attend to one, or a few, at the expense of others, is likewise a course inimical to the laws of our nature, and to the conditions of our well-being. Sometimes we see men who have given themselves up to the gratification of a few of their many instincts. What sickening specimens they are of human degeneracy! All must have their due scope. Each must have liberty to slake its thirst, and that according to its relative importance. The universe abounds with elysian fountains, ever fresh and clear, correspondent to every panting instinct. The question is, What master impulse of the soul will allow and insure this free scope for all that nature desires, for without it there is no happiness? Again, we assert nothing but supreme love to the ABSOLUTE ONE; and that for the following reasons:—

First: Because, whilst it allows the healthy amount of liberty to all the desires of the inferior nature, it alone secures the gratification of the *spiritual* propensity. The desire for right, for worship, for the Divine approval, which are the primary desires of our higher nature, cannot possibly be gratified under the sway of any other impulse.

Secondly: Because it is the only master impulse that will prevent the mind from making the gratification of

desires the *end* of action, which is ever inimical to happiness. All experience shows that the man who seeks pleasure as an end misses his mark, sinks brutewards, and deposits seeds that shall produce a crop of misery one day. Instead, therefore, of godliness excluding man from any true pleasure, sealing up any source of true joy, it alone sets them all before him, and so directs him to their use that he shall not be disappointed.

Man's happiness in his work requires not only a full scope for his desires, but also the *full development of his powers.* Happiness is in *action,* and every power is intended for action. Human happiness, therefore, can only be complete as all the powers have their full and legitimate play. As all the chords of a well-tuned instrument contribute to the music which it is designed to produce, so all the powers of the soul are intended to contribute to the sum of felicity which man is fitted to enjoy. No chord must lie untouched; each must send forth some vibration to make the harmony complete. I believe that there are powers in the human mind which no philosophy has yet discovered—capabilities for mighty deeds in embryo. It seems obvious to me, from a variety of considerations, that these powers can only be brought forth into full and harmonious action under the sentiment of *supreme* love to God. The earth contains innumerable seeds of life embedded in its soil. New vegetable kingdoms, with waving fields and mighty forests, will one day start from the dust on which we tread; but it must be by the help of the sun. Without the solar influence, these precious seeds must lie dormant for ever. So is it with human souls;

there are wonderful things within them—things of which our loftiest poetry, our profoundest philosophies, our noblest institutions, our most splendid inventions and most magnificent arts, are but childish specimens. They will only spring up and grow under the master influence of love to God. *Love to God is the sun of souls.*

LECTURE X.

THE NECESSARY INSTRUMENT OF TRUE PROGRESS.

How is this supreme sympathy to be generated in a nature where, if there be not a positive dislike, there is, to say the least, the most stolid indifference? Two things are indispensable. I. There must come to us a new revelation. II. This new revelation should present God in aspects of attraction unknown before. In what aspects should this new revelation present God, so as to awaken in mankind this supreme sympathy? First: As a personal existent. Secondly: As unquestionably placable. Thirdly: As individually merciful. Fourthly: As supremely love-worthy? Now, Christianity unfolds The Eternal in all the varied phases which the heart of humanity requires.

THE NECESSARY INSTRUMENT OF TRUE PROGRESS.

SUPREME SYMPATHY WITH GOD IS THE MASTER IMPULSE OF TRUE PROGRESS. I must venture to suppose that sufficient has been advanced in the preceding lecture to commend this position to your hearty belief. And what is this supreme sympathy but another name for PIETY? Church membership, scriptural views, occasional feelings of devotion, and formal worship, have too often been confounded with piety. But it is something deeper and broader, more necessary to, and congruous with, human nature than all this; something anterior to all conventional dogmas and churches, and which will survive their ruin; something that is not only healthy and manly, but essential to the healthfulness and manliness of man. The narrowness of soul, the mawkishness of sentiment, and the grimace, too often associated with the holy word, I loathe as much as any honest sceptic that may read these humble lines. In advocating piety as supreme sympathy with the *absolutely* good, I feel that I am doing what sound philosophy inculcates, and true philanthropy demands. It is the only soil where virtuous deeds can grow—the only fount whence streams of true blessedness proceed. It is the *substratum*

of moral goodness in the creature—it is the inspiration of the holy universe. Its production in man is the ultimate design of Christianity. In it consists the *salvation* of the soul. He who has it *is* "saved;" he who has it not *is* "lost."

Now, it must be obvious to all, whether they believe the Bible or not, that this piety—this supreme sympathy with God, which is the indispensable motive to true progress—is not generally, to say the least, possessed by mankind. Do not all the moral attributes, attitudes, and acts, of the world declare the fact? The presiding affection of a man is ever patent in his daily life. Incidental and subordinate feelings he may conceal, but the regal disposition must show itself. This is the heart that pulsates through the whole circle of his life—the vital sap that runs through, shapes, and colours, every branch and leaf of his conduct. For example: by a necessary law of mind, the chief object of affection will ever be the chief subject of thought, the chief theme in conversation, the chief end in the purpose, and the chief fashioner of character. The dearest objects of our hearts ever transform us into their own image. These are unquestionable facts in the philosophy of mind; and do they not prove, beyond all debate, that the supreme sympathy of humanity is not with its God? For who will say that the ABSOLUTE ONE is the chief thought in the world's intellect—the chief topic in its talk—the chief aim in its multiform projects, and the chief moulder of its character? No, no. Practically, the world is "without God."

Mankind, then, lack this necessary impulse to true progress. However you may interpret the cause, the fact

is obvious to all. Men have not that *state of heart*, without which they cannot take one step in the line of true advancement. What, then, is to be done? We are made for progress. It is the deepest aspiration of our nature. But somehow or other, we have lost that *sympathy*, without which it cannot be realized. We must, therefore, either resign the hope of progress, or seek a change of heart. In the nature of the case there is no other alternative. But the hope of progress we cannot give up: it would be our ruin. We should sink to inactivity, and be entombed in the grave of despair. We must, therefore, to use the figurative language of the Bible, seek a "new heart"—a "regeneration"—a "conversion." The "stony heart" of indifference towards God must be taken away, and the "fleshy heart" of supreme sympathy must be given. This change is no arbitrary enactment; it arises from the necessity of the case. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again."

The problem which now comes up and presses for solution is—How is this to be accomplished? How is this supreme sympathy to be generated in a nature, where, if there is not a positive dislike, there is, to say the least, the most stolid indifference? Is there any instrumentality suited to effect this end? If so, What? Given: a man, with a heart under the supreme influence of the senses or the world, a heart in which any sentiment about God, when it is felt, is treated as an unwelcome visitant, and expelled as speedily as possible: to find out the kind of agency which is necessary, in the nature of the case, to *redeem* within it this supreme sympathy with God, without infringing any principle of freedom, or offering the slightest

violence to man's moral constitution? This is the problem to which we shall now address ourselves, and whose solution we shall seek, at first, in directions independent of the Scriptures.

Now, it seems clear to me that two things are indispensable; and from the very nature of the case—first, *a new revelation;* and, secondly, *a new revelation presenting God to the heart in forms of attraction before unknown.*

I. *There must come to us a new revelation.* It is a law of mind, that the state of our hearts in relation to an object is ever under the controlling influence of the views we entertain concerning it. Our sympathies are evermore dependent upon our ideas. We are dead to that immeasurable universe of things which lies beyond the narrow boundary of our knowledge. If you would awaken within me new sympathies for objects, heighten or destroy old ones, you must give me new ideas. Before you can change my feelings in relation to any man, you must change my *views* of him. This law is as invariable and absolute as any of the laws that govern the material world. The waves of the ocean are not more bound by gravitation than are all the *heart-states* of the soul bound by this law. Yet it does not enslave us. Nay, it is the charter of our freedom. Emotion is, perhaps, always the prompting and proximate cause of our actions; and had we no control over it, we should be moved as machines by its resistless force. But as emotion is thus under the government of ideas—as we can quench old passions, however furiously they may flame, or kindle new ones by ideas—we are free. For in the formation of ideas are we not ever our own masters? Who or what can force us to think?

Before, then, you can awaken this supreme sympathy with God in the heart, where *indifference* reigns, you must present to the mind some new idea about Him. But whence is the idea suited to this all-important end to be derived? Can you get it from nature—the original revelation? We think not, for the two following reasons:—

First: *Under the revelation of nature indifference has sprung up and grown.* Indifference to God is an abnormal state of the soul. All moral mind, in its best condition, is filled with an all-swaying love to the Creator. This is the fire of the seraph, the inspiration of the heavenly choirs, the soul of the countless good in all worlds! The *moral function* of nature is to minister to this element, not to create it—to feed the holy flame, not to kindle it. Indeed, the revelation of nature has no message to the stolid heart: every chapter and verse of the mighty volume were written before a soul, dead to its Maker, existed. What nature could not prevent, can you expect it to destroy?

Secondly: *Under the unaided revelation of nature we do not find this supreme sympathy produced.* I argue not with the man who tells me that the doctrine and influence of nature are sufficient to train the human soul to virtue and religion. I meet him by facts. I point him to ancient Egypt, to Persia, to Greece, and to Rome, to China, to India, and to the unnumbered islands of the sea; to the untold millions that only live in history, and to the millions that are still the living tenants of this globe; and ask, Where is their virtue? Where is their religion? Verily, as Coleridge has it, "philosophy in the Pagan night was only as the fire-fly of the tropics, making itself visible, but not irradiating the darkness." Pagan sages had all the advantages of

nature,—most of them to a greater *educational* extent than we, the men of this little island, have. Nature spoke to them in her most thrilling and startling tones, and appeared to them in her grandest forms, most imposing attitudes, poetic moods, and suggestive influences; and yet, Can you select from the best of them one who comes up to *your own ideal* of goodness—one whom you would hold up as an example to your children? We trow not.

Do I disparage nature in all this? Such is not my aim; far from it. I do not believe in that theology which deems it well to depreciate nature in order to exalt the Bible. I regard the works of God not only as congruous with his word, but as holy, and as having equal claims to reverential thought. Nor do I feel that nature, as a *religious power*, has been a failure, and that it is superseded by Christianity. It is true, indeed, that man has fallen from a vital and ruling sympathy with those spiritual and eternal principles of which nature is the primitive organ and majestic type, and that that sympathy is the spirit of all holiness and the bond of all moral harmony throughout the universe. But this is no fault of nature; nor is she in her *religious* function to be thought of as superseded, and henceforth unnecessary, on this account. The Bible is not to take us away from nature, but to raise us up to it; and experience shows, that just as our spirits have been quickened into devotion by the Divine word, is the amount of religious power which nature has over us. I have no words to express the idea I have of the amount of religious power which nature is capable of exerting upon a quickened soul. The poet speaks of "the genius of the mountain and the wood," of "the field and the flood," "the sea and the stars." Yes,

there is a divine and soul-elevating genius breathing warmly through every avenue of this great universe. What man of spiritual feeling or taste has not felt it in the sentiments of wonder, reverence, adoration, self-forgetfulness, which have come over him as he has trodden the mountain or the beach, walked the fields in summer's beauty, or watched the stars in winter's night?

> "Read nature; nature is a friend to truth;
> Nature is Christian; preaches to mankind;
> And bids dead matter aid us in our creed."

What I say is, that nature—though grand, stirring, varied, and mighty, in her spiritual function—is not sufficient to quicken the dead heart of humanity into sympathy with its Maker.

The other thing which seems to me indispensable is—

II. *That this new revelation should present God in aspects of attraction unknown before.* If the revelation give no new view of God, it is obvious that no purpose would be answered by it. A mere republication of the doctrines of nature would be little else than a superfluity. Or if it gave a new view, and that view were repulsive, it would only drive the spirit still farther from its Maker. The question, then, is—In what aspect, or aspects, should this new revelation present God, so as to awaken in mankind this supreme sympathy? In looking seriously and philosophically at the case, I think we should arrive at the conclusion that He must be presented to us in the following aspects so as to answer this purpose.

First: *As a personal existence.* Between the intellect and the heart there is this difference: the one likes *generals*, and the other *particulars*. The intellect is ever striving to

ascend from particular facts to general truths. It finds no resting-place—no delight in mere details. It is up in the calm regions of abstraction, amidst the great interpreting canons of things, that it seeks its heaven. Thither it ascends for those key-principles which unlock new empires of truth. It is not so with the heart. It likes the particular and the formal. It individualizes. The *individualities* of some particular man will move and attract it more than all the features that are common to a million generations—to the race. Ancient mythology—yes, and modern polytheism—are illustrations of this fact in our nature. Hence you have the heart personalizing the infinite existence—reducing Him, who is infinitely greater than the great universe, into some specific form which sometimes can be lifted by the hand of a child; and that little form shall stir the soul more than the majestic landscapes or the mighty stars. Plato's great intellect revelled amidst universal truths, but his heart required a specific god. If the Almighty, therefore, is to move dead hearts into new life, He must appear to them, not merely as The All-diffusive Energy—One with everything in the creation—the *Infinite All;* but as One having *personal* attributes—sympathy, heart, will, conversableness. God, in nature, seems too vague, too vast, too impersonal, to meet the demands of our hearts as they now are. We require to have Him brought, as it were, into a certain place and form; in other words, to have Him *personalized*, in order to draw forth to Him the supreme sympathy of our indifferent spirits.*

* See "Essays on some of the Peculiarities of the Christian Religion," by Richard Whately, D.D., Archbishop of Dublin. Essay ii. pp. 167, &c.

Another aspect in which it seems to us He must appear in order to produce this effect is—

Secondly: *As unquestionably placable.* Man, everywhere, in all parts of the globe, in all stages of civilization, and in connection with all religions, has a deep *sense of guilt.* This impression is co-ordinate with moral thoughts. As soon as men begin to think upon their moral relations, they feel the poignant pang. It is the cause of most sacrifices, the spirit of all superstitions, the emphasis of all woe, the deepest groan of the world. We may differ in our methods of explaining this fact, but on the question of its existence there can be no debate.

Now, we regard this fact as one of the greatest obstructions to the awakening of supreme sympathy to God in the heart. And why? The reason is obvious. The mind, under its influence, invariably regards God as a Being of vengeance, and regarding Him as such, can never love Him. How far there is anything of wrath in the Divine nature, answering to the apprehensions of a sin-convicted and guilty spirit, is a question of profound interest to the philosophic theologian, but is of no importance to my present argument. All the Divine anger is in the excited imagination of the guilty conscience, and nowhere else, says the sceptic. Presumptuous mortal! how knowest thou? Hast thou fathomed the depths of infinitude? But be it so. That the awakened sinner *feels* that God is angry is granted, and this is enough for our argument. The outward, in *relation to us,* is greatly dependent upon our state and condition. Alter my senses, and you will alter the material universe to me; alter the moral feelings of my soul, and you will alter God to me.

I say, to *me*. The universe is not altered in itself, when changes take place in my physical organs. God is immutable, whatever changes pass over this heart of mine. But relatively to me, though not in themselves, and not to others, all things without, change with the changes within. Man, under a sense of guilt, *feels* that God is angry. His imagination clothes Him with attributes of vengeance and terror, and his spirit crouches before Him as before an Infinite Moloch. So long as the mind has this idea of God, all attempts to awaken supreme sympathy towards Him must prove futile. For who can love vengeance? Who can be attracted by the "consuming fire" of an indignant God? From such a Being the mind flees in terror, and cries for rocks and mountains to hide from his presence. What is wanted, therefore, is such a manifestation of God as satisfies the heart that He is placable—that He will pardon our sins—smile propitiously upon us, and make us happy.

Another aspect in which it seems to us He must appear, in order to produce this effect is,

Thirdly: *As individually merciful*—as one merciful to us as individuals. Let me suppose that you are at this moment in a state of thorough indifference to one towards whom, at one time, you felt the strongest attachment: the closest intimacy once subsisted between you—your hearts throbbed in unison—your souls intermingled their holiest secrets, and you twain were one. But now you seldom think of him; and when you do, the thoughts of him are not pleasant—they are mingled with fear and dread, if not with anger. Now, what must he do in order to remove this state of your heart towards him, and to rekindle the old

sentiments of holy friendship? It seems to me that there is but one way. Let him show that he loves you—loves you sincerely and intensely, and would make any sacrifice to serve you; let him work this conviction into your heart, and forthwith will spring up all the ardent sympathies of love. Love begets love, and nothing else can.* It is just so in relation to the soul and God. If the Eternal would destroy your indifference towards Him, He must convince you of his love to *you*. This is the only power that could restore your love to Him. He must convince you not merely of his love to the universe, or to humanity in general—but to you individually. A conviction that He hath "loved me" is the power to destroy my enmity, and to rekindle within my soul the flame of gracious affections.

There is yet another aspect in which God must appear to the heart in order to awaken this supreme sympathy, and that is—

Fourthly: *As supremely loveworthy.* In our moral constitution there is an ideal of excellence. It is the sun of our souls. It often appears most bright, and throws its beams over the whole region of consciousness, yielding no small amount of self-regret at the discovery of so much imperfection. The discrepancy between the ideal and actual, the felt *ought*, and the *is*, indicates that some sad catastrophe has befallen our nature, and is ever the source of moral sorrow and solicitude. This ideal, though weakened and darkened through sin, is, thank God! still strong enough to prevent the heart from centering all its sympathies in any object that does not fully correspond with itself. Hence, before the Eternal can draw forth our

* See Homily on "Man-growth."—"Homilist," vol. i. p. 137.

supreme sympathy, He must appear to us as the supremely good. Rectitude, truth, disinterestedness, toward which all the deep streams of our spiritual nature are made to flow, must appear to us in their highest form in any object that seeks the supreme love of our hearts. Neither of the other three manifestations, separately nor combined—though each is indispensable—could do without this. His *personality* may awaken our interest, His *placableness* our hope, and his *mercifulness* our gratitude: but do these engage *all* the sympathies of the heart? No. There is *esteem*, which delights in goodness for its own sake; *confidence*, which feels itself safe in the power of another; and that *self-renunciation*, perhaps the divinest and deepest of all our feelings, which prompts us to yield up our every energy to a higher will; all these are still undeveloped, and can only be developed by the manifestation of the *supremely* good.

The answer which I have thus attempted to the question —What is necessary to awaken supreme sympathy towards God in the depraved heart?—will, I think, appear satisfactory to those who attend to the facts of their own nature, and to the laws which regulate moral influence. It is from such facts and laws that we have, in sooth, obtained the answer. Apart altogether from the Bible, it is perfectly demonstrable to us, that the ABSOLUTE ONE must appear to the depraved heart as *personal, placable, merciful, and supremely good*, in order to reproduce within it the supreme sympathy.

Now comes the question, *Is there a revelation which presents God to man in these aspects?* I have no hesitation in declaring the affirmative; yea, I devoutly thank my Maker,

and rejoice that I can do so. CHRISTIANITY unfolds the Eternal in all the varied phases which the heart of humanity requires to meet its fallen state.

Here He is in person. In the Man Christ we have God incarnate. He is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father he has declared him." In Christ this *personality* has a twofold attraction. It is *in our nature.* Had He appeared in the nature of some superhuman existence, there would not, we think, have been such an appeal to the sympathies within us: and it is not only in our nature, but in *the tenderest relationship*—that of a FATHER. "Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the *Father*, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? HE THAT HATH SEEN ME, HATH SEEN THE FATHER." Philip's request was but an echo of the deep, constant, world-wide, cry of humanity, for a *parental God.* Not the God of the *Pantheist*, identical with the universe; nor the God of the Deist, in the heights of heaven, away in his pavilion, uninterested in the concerns of man; nor the God of the narrow theologian, wrathful in feeling, and arbitrary in power; but a *parental God* the world wants; and the *life of Jesus is a response to this cry of souls.* "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." If it be asked, How can the Infinite appear in the finite person of man? I attempt no exposition of the mystery; but I ask, How does the infinite appear in nature? Is not the universe, however great, infinitely less than infinitude? Christ

brought the Eternal Person close to the eye of the world's heart.

Here He is all placable. In this revelation the *Absolute One* appears to us, mercifully offering to forgive our sins—to "blot them out of his book"—to bury them in the sea from our view. Here He is "IN CHRIST RECONCILING THE WORLD UNTO HIMSELF;" saying to us, in a thousand forms of touching speech, "Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

Here He is individually merciful. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "HE LOVED US AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR US." "Herein is love!"

Here He is supremely loveworthy. There is not a property of moral goodness, of which we can form any conception, that is not embodied in the highest conceivable form in the life of Jesus. The refulgent rays of holiness, as they stream directly from the central sun of the Absolute, are too strong for our gaze; but in Jesus they come mildly, and fascinatingly reflected from the deep and pure humanities of our nature.

What, then, is the sum of my argument? Why, supreme sympathy with God being the necessary impulse to true

progress, and the revelation of God in Christ being necessary to produce this impulse, the sum of the whole is expressed in the text,* ὅτι χωρὶς ἐμοῦ οὐ δύνασθε ποιεῖν οὐδέν. "*Apart from me ye can produce no fruit.*" Supreme sympathy with God is the life of your spiritual nature, and without life there can be no growth, efflorescence, or fruit.

But you can no more obtain this without Christ's revelation than the branch can derive vital sap when cut off from its parent stock. Sceptics may sneer at Christianity; they may exaggerate its difficulties, and deny its truth. What of that! Humanity demands it, if humanity is to advance. Can the river flow when cut off from its fountains? Can the tree grow when uprooted from its mother soil? Can the planet shine when severed from the sun? Can you see nature's beauties without the light? Can you breathe without the flowing air? No more can I believe, even on philosophic grounds, that my nature can travel on the path of true advancement without Christianity. "Without me ye can do nothing." No, illustrious Teacher! we shall never tread the upward path of being without Thee!

> "Loose me from earth's enclosure, from the sun's
> Contracted circle set my heart at large;
> Eliminate my spirit, give it range
> Through provinces of thought yet unexplored;
> Teach me, by this stupendous scaffolding,
> Creation's golden steps, to climb to thee."

* John xv. 5.

LECTURE XI.

THE OBSTRUCTIONS TO TRUE PROGRESS.

What are not obstructions to true progress? First: The physical world is no necessary obstruction to true progress. Secondly: Physical labour is not a necessary obstruction to true progress. Thirdly: Commercial pursuits are not necessary obstructions to true progress. Fourthly: Animal appetites are not necessary obstructions to true progress. What then are the hindrances to the true advancement of man? The whole may be summed up in two things:—I. A non-recognition of God, or practical atheism. II. A wrong recognition of God, or a corrupt theology. What are those views of God which are wrong in their object? First: Those which are wrong in relation to his character. Secondly: Those which are wrong in relation to his religion. What are those views of God which are wrong in their nature? First: Those which are dogmatic, rather than convictional. Secondly: Those that are occasional, rather than habitual, in their influence.

THE OBSTRUCTIONS TO TRUE PROGRESS.

BY this time two facts must appear most obvious and undeniable to all who have faithfully followed us thus far in our line of argument. First: That supreme sympathy with God is the indispensable impulse to true progress. This sympathy, we have seen, is the very life of the soul; and without life there can be no growth. The lifeless plant and the dead animal, however young, cease to grow. So it is with souls. Where this spiritual life has become extinct not one advancing step can be taken: there is no power either to *appropriate*, or to *distribute*, or to *worship*. The second fact, which we think has been made convincingly evident is, that Christianity is indispensable to the awakening of this necessary impulse. The system of Jesus appears to us to be as essential to the generating of this impulse in a soul indifferent to God, as the sun is to the germination and growth of the earth's innumerable seeds. Yes, and more so. I can see the necessity of the one, but not of the other. I cannot see why the seeds should not grow without the solar rays; I only know from observation they do not; but I can see from the known laws of mind, how a morally dead spirit cannot be quickened without that display

of divine love which we have in Christianity. Observation teaches me that, in the natural world, the rains may descend, the winds may breathe, and all the various gases may properly operate, yet that, without the sun, the seeds of the husbandman would never come to a harvest. So philosophy and consciousness, as well as observation, teach me that neither your science nor art, your poetry nor philosophy, your laws nor education, your ethics nor religions, will re-quicken the dormant affection in the depraved soul apart from the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Here, we may remark, in passing, is an argument of no feeble character for the divinity of Christianity. Progress is man's true destination; but not one step of progress can he take without the Gospel. If a man is to live, he must have air; if he is to advance, he must have Christianity. The argument may be thrown into the syllogistic form, and may stand thus:—Whatever is indispensable to the *true* destiny of man, is from God: Christianity is essential to the true destiny of man, *which is progress:* therefore Christianity is from God. I do not know of any Theist, however sceptical, who would deny, or even doubt, the first premiss; and from what has already been advanced, the second appears capable of a perfectly scientific demonstration; and the conclusion, therefore, stands demonstrated. Just as I feel bound to believe that the Author of my respiratory organs is the Author of the air around me, and the Author of my eyes is the Author of the light that streams from above, so I am compelled to believe that the Author of my *progressive* soul is the Author of Christ's Gospel. It is as adapted

* See "Dr. Chalmers's Account of his own Ministerial Experience;" also "The History of the Moravian Mission."

and necessary to my instincts and capacities for advancement, as the atmosphere to the lungs, or the light to the eye. Man must either renounce the idea of progress, or he must receive Christianity: there is no other alternative.

Having offered these remarks, which seem to rise out of our previous discussion, we proceed to notice *the obstructions to true progress.* Though men are made for progress, and, where Christianity exists, possess all the necessary appliances, yet very few advance at all, and fewer still advance as they ought. What, then, are the obstructions? As this question, like many others connected with our destiny, is mixed up in the popular mind with an immense amount of error, we must begin our reply in the *negative* form.

First: *The physical world is no necessary obstruction to the true progress of man.* There is an idea in some quarters, vague—but often very practical, that the world we live in is essentially opposed to the interest and growth of the soul; as if some subtile, but undefinable, element ran through every part of this our planet, antagonistic to our spiritual culture and well-being. The idea sometimes comes out in the doleful music of the words,

> "Lord, what a wretched land is this
> That yields us no supplies."

As such a notion comes not to anyone as the result of reasoning, and as the class who entertain it are not likely to trouble themselves with our cogitations, any attempt at a formal refutation would be so much waste of time and strength. Let it suffice to state, that we regard this world, as we have before intimated, with all its variety of scenery,

and sound, production and power, embosomed in an atmosphere of music and fragrance, and radiant with suns and stars, as a divine help for the soul. It is a school, whose magnificent walls are covered with those suggestive lessons, by study of which the great Father makes his children "meet for the inheritance of the saints of light." It is a medium through which the human spirit receives into itself the deep and quickening thoughts of the Divine. It is a temple, every part of which is consecrated for worship, and filled with the glories of the shekinah.

Secondly: *Physical labour is not a necessary obstruction to true progress.* Men have come to regard labour as an evil—a curse rather than a blessing, the doom of the poor, the unfortunate and oppressed, rather than the common privilege of all. Men who live by manual labour are looked down upon and pitied; and it is not until they become independent of it—until their brown and horny hands grow somewhat white and soft, and they drop the tool and wear the tawdry ring—that they are considered respectable and happy. It comes not within our plan to trace the origin of this monstrous idea, which has risen to such a reigning power over the civilized world. We aver, however, that it springs neither from true philosophy nor the Bible. *Physical labour is a divine institution.* In the days of human innocence, man was put into the garden "to dress and to keep it." As a divine institution, instead of being an obstruction to true progress, it is one of its most effective and necessary means. It is adapted to promote *vigour*—vigour of body, mind, and character. Why does the Almighty require man to labour, think you? Why does he require him to ply his physical energies, in order to extract

from the earth the necessary elements of life? Why has He left us to build our own houses, to weave our own garments, and to dig out of the soil our own food? Could not He, who adorns the lily, and feeds the fowls of heaven, have prepared all to our hand? Manifestly, yes. But He has not done so, because we have *souls*, and physical labour is adapted to develop their moral powers. To work the rough elements of the earth into the necessary means of subsistence and comfort calls forth an energy of will, a power of endurance, and a self-reliance, which are amongst the necessary attributes of true progress. Hence it is that the poor man, who toils day after day to turn some barren common into fruitfulness, may, at the very same time, and by the very same means, be cultivating those moral germs of soul that will bloom around him, and bless his being, in the great eternity.

Thirdly: *Commercial pursuits are not necessary obstructions to true progress.* Men are constantly urging their business as an apology for their spiritual deficiencies. They wish us to understand that they would be *so* religious and useful, were it not for the pressure of mercantile engagements. Everywhere the denizens of the market preach the doctrine that business is opposed to religion. But commerce, like labour, is, obviously, a *divine ordinance.* Man has an *instinct* for commerce. He has a bartering propensity, as well as a bartering power. Visit the darkest regions of barbaric life, and you will find the wild and savage natives driving some species of trade. They may only exchange feathers, shells, or some petty toys; still it is commerce. Our missionaries often introduce themselves to heathen scenes, and ingratiate themselves with heathen hearts, by

first appealing to this mercantile instinct. Man *needs* commerce. The Almighty has not brought within the sphere of man's nativity all the provision he requires for his entire well-being. He needs other minerals than those which are embosomed in his native mountains; other fruits than those which are indigenous to his own soil; other arts than those which can be invented by his own brain; and other trades than those which can be wrought by his own hand. He needs something of all that this omniferous earth contains—some product from every zone, and some help from every original genius and every skilful hand. He must, therefore, exchange commodities with the people of all lands, if he is to supply all his ever-multiplying wants as a progressive being.

Nature, too, affords man *facilities* for this world-wide commerce. The various parts of the world are rendered accessible to each other by rivers, and seas, and oceans; and these seem to wait ever, in throbbing earnestness, to carry to and fro, for our benefit, the treasures of every land. This mercantile intercourse, by the principle of inter-dependence, tends to promote goodwill and brotherhood throughout the world. Inter-dependence is the great harmonizing force of the universe, both material and mental. Atom is dependent on atom, mind on mind. The independence of one country on another would be an anomaly in the creation. As a doctrine, it is but political cant for monopolizing ends. Let this principle of inter-dependence break itself away from the chains of narrow governments, and be set free to work amongst the peoples of the world —let every protective bolt on the door of universal commerce be for ever drawn—and the world's market open to

every trader, and very soon nations will have but little use for those armies and navies which now depress their energies and destroy their wealth.

From all these considerations, we infer, that commerce is a *divine ordinance.* We need not quote Scripture in support of this conclusion; it is implied in almost every chapter which bears on the practical conduct of men. But if it is a divine ordinance, Who will dare say it is a *necessary* obstruction to the true progress of man? No! we consider it, to use a popular sentence, one of the best "means of grace." What a *school* is the market for the study of human nature! How the tendencies and idiosyncrasies of mind come out under the influence of trade! You can read far more interesting and practical chapters on *man*, as he appears in commercial attitudes, than you can find in any book on mental science. What a *gymnasium* is the market for the exercise of virtuous principles! The religious life, like every other, requires exercise to get strength and manly tone. Principles, like trees, need the open air, winds and storms, to strengthen their fibres and to deepen their roots. What an *arena* is the market for valorous achievements! In no other scene has a good man such an opportunity for doing open and honourable battle with avarice, falsehood, dishonesty, and craft. He who conquers these is the true hero: he fights the good fight of faith, and wins the crown of life. What a *medium* is the market for the importation of true principles! The exchange of material commodities is ever associated, as the Creator undoubtedly designed it should be, with a higher exchange—the exchange of thought, feeling, mind. The commerce of soul is by far the highest aspect, and most important end,

of all other commerce. In the markets of the world mind flows and re-flows into mind, and the thoughts of nations mingle together. The British market is the heart of the civilized world; give it a healthy and a holy pulsation, and its salutary influence shall be felt afar. Perish, then, the idea that commercial pursuits are necessary obstructions to true progress! Depraved man generally makes them so, because he perverts every other divine institution; but they are divinely designed and fitted for his highest spiritual good.

Fourthly: *Animal appetites are not necessarily obstructions to true progress.** The old Manichæan idea, that the various impulses of the body are opposed to the true interests of the soul, is as extensive in its influence as it is unfounded on evidence and injurious in tendency. There are multitudes who would give us to understand that there is a necessary antagonism between the two great parts of our being. They speak of evil as if it were wrought into the very texture of the physical economy, and can only be eradicated by a species of corporeal mortification. That the appetites have gained a dominion over man, which is inimical to virtue and advancement, is too obvious to

* "This class of our active principles (*i.e.*, appetites) is distinguished by the following circumstances:—1. They take their rise from the body, and are common to us with the brutes. 2. They are not constant, but occasional. 3. They are accompanied with an easy sensation, which is strong or weak in proportion to the strength or weakness of the appetite. Our appetites are three in number—hunger, thirst, and the appetite of the sex. Of these, two were intended for the preservation of the individual, the third for the contiuuance of the species; and without them reason would have been insufficient for these important purposes."—DUGALD STEWART.

admit of debate. Everywhere, in scenes of pleasure and business—and too often even in literature and religion—you may write, "The body reigns here." The intellectual powers are but its vassals, and even the moral sympathies bow to its sceptre. But the fault of all this is not in the body, but in the soul; not in the appetites, but in the man. He has *voluntarily* trained them to this ascendency. He has lifted them to the throne, and become their willing liege.

We raise our humble protest against the doctrine that the appetites are evils in themselves, and opposed to the spiritual well-being of man. It charges our Maker with wrong,* and lays the blame of our sins on Him. Our assertion, on the contrary, is, that instead of being necessary obstructions to the soul's advancement, they are *indispensable to its true life and growth.*

This will appear, if we consider two things:—

First: *They are a necessary stimulus to intellectual action.* It has been stated, in a previous lecture, that intellectual investigation is essential to progress. Thought is the digestive power of the soul; nothing in the universe turns to spiritual nutriment without it. It is the pinion on which it rises heavenward from this polluted earth. But how much *thought* would there be without these appetites?

* "Nor is there in the human being now, as the result of the fall, any positive principle which prompts to *ungodly* action. Such a principle would be in itself, in its own distinct nature, a bad and an unwholesome principle—a principle which could not, consequently, be implanted by God, and which yet could not have sprung from any other cause; for every positive principle—*i.e.*, everything that has real existence, or entity, in the phraseology of our olden writers—must be from God."—Dr. PAYNE, on "Original Sin."

However strong man's native desire for knowledge may be, we think the world's mind would soon sink into inaction without them. They set the intellectual machine to work, and keep it going. They are the water on the mill-wheel, the steam in the engine, the tides in the ocean. The soul *cannot* do without them here in the first stages of her earthly state.

Secondly: *They are a necessary condition to moral strength.* The spiritual powers of the soul can only get strength by exercise;—but what have you here to challenge these into action so effectively as appetite? Conscience assures the man that he is *responsible* for every act; and these appetites are the blind and constant prompters to action. Hence the assiduous care and resolute effort required to prevent the wrong, and to do the right. They do not give the soul any time to sleep; they are ever returning and pressing their demands;—and if holiness and self-government are to be maintained, the soul must be always at its watch-post with girded loins. Indeed, I cannot see how virtue and moral greatness could be developed in man had he not these appetites to contend with and to guide. Excellence gets its energy from difficulties, and wins its laurels in battle. Who are the men—not that the world calls its heroes, but whom humanity *feels* to be its heroes—who draw out most of its inner heart in admiration and love? Not those whose path has been smooth and flowery, whose life has flown on like a placid river, mirroring the sunshine and rippled by no adverse breeze—but those who have climbed the rugged steeps, and battled with the furious storms; who have struggled hard, "with strong cries and tears," to do the right; who have sacrificed plea-

sure to principle, and resisted the demands of appetite in obedience to conscience. These are the men whose name the heart rescues from oblivion, and memory loves to honour!

Neither of these things, the *world, labour, commerce, nor appetites*—is then a necessary obstruction to progress. Nay, they are all designed and adapted to promote it. Christ did not pray that his disciples should be taken out of the world. He knew that the world not only required them, but that they required it. Yes, brother, you need its trials to humble you, its storms to purify the dark atmosphere about your heart, its difficulties to challenge your energies, its changes to remind you that this is not your home, its labours to invigorate your brain, on whose healthful action the force both of your intellect and character depends. Indulge not in any morbid dissatisfaction with your earthly lot. Use everything about you and within you, as the farmer uses the field to produce fruit, that shall sustain him in after life; as the pupil the school, to attain qualifications for higher offices in time to come.

We must now approach the *positive* side of the question, and endeavour to state, as clearly and concisely as possible, what are the hindrances to the true advancement of man. The whole of them may, indeed, be summed up in two things:—

I. *A non-recognition of God, or practical Atheism.* There are two classes of men who do not recognise God—the theoretical Atheists and the indifferent Theists. The former disbelieve, or at least profess to disbelieve, in the existence of God. To them there is nothing *before* "nature"—nothing *higher* than "nature." Nature does everything—

is everything; the raw material out of which all things are formed, and the plastic agency by which all things are organized. She is at once the clay and the potter, the giver and receiver, the subject and the sovereign. They have no God to recognise. The other class *profess* to believe in a Supreme ONE. They shudder at *theoretic* Atheists, construct arguments to refute their wicked creed, and hurl the fiercest thunders of their indignation at their impious heads; yet, practically, *they* are "without God." The *operative* idea of God is not in all their thoughts. Their sympathies, plans, aims, and daily life, are *exactly* the same as if HE existed not. Were they to be convinced to-day by some hitherto unknown, but resistless, argument, that *Theism* was a delusion, and that there was nothing in the universe higher than itself, their hearts and lives to-morrow would be the same. The same spirit of self-seeking, worldliness, and love of pleasure, which rule the theoretic Atheist, govern them. Whilst the difference between the two classes is fancied, not real, the theoretic Atheist has the advantage of the other in this,—his conduct is more consistent with his professed beliefs.

Now, it is obvious that since supreme sympathy with God is the necessary impulse to true progress, the non-recognition of Him is a mighty obstruction: for who can love an unknown being? Who can feel a supreme sympathy with one who seldom, if ever, engrosses the attention? How can the heart feel what the intellect does not see? ATHEISM—*practical* Atheism—is a STUMBLING-BLOCK which must be removed—nay, a mountain that must be levelled—before the first step in true progress can be taken.

Another obstruction is—

II. *A wrong recognition of God, or a corrupt theology.* A man may recognise God,—that is, he may admit his existence, and yet have such views about Him as would repel rather than attract; generate hate, rather than awaken love. There are two classes of wrong views of God—those which are wrong in relation to their *object*, and those which are right in their object but wrong in their own *nature*. As each of these classes contains numerous popular and powerful hindrances to human advancement, we purpose to enter into a somewhat minute examination of both classes.

Let us proceed to notice some of those views of God which ARE WRONG IN THEIR OBJECT;—and these again include two minor classes, which we shall find very obstructive; those which are wrong in relation to his character, and those which are wrong in relation to his service.

First: *Those which are wrong in relation to his character.* There are ideas of God entertained, and even advocated, by some, which are essentially incompatible with the spirit of progress. Sometimes He is regarded as *callous*. He is Almighty and All-wise, but without feeling and heart. He is enthroned in his dominions; sees the tide of ages flow, the out-birth of new worlds and systems, and the decay and wreck of old ones; hears the songs of virtue, the shrieks of vice, and the cries of penitence; but *feels* nothing. He is heartless. Sometimes He is regarded as *arbitrary*. He is guided in his operations by no *reasons* appreciable by his creatures. His conduct is not to be explained by any principle of right. He has power to do

whatever He please, and He does it. His delight in the infinitude of his power is the mainspring of his conduct. He translates Manassehs to Heaven, and consigns the unconscious infant to the flames, because the "potter hath power over the clay to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour." Sometimes He is regarded as *revengeful.* Humanity has sinned against Him, and He burns with anger, and whets his glittering sword. Though Adam and his posterity sink to "bottomless perdition," He must be revenged; He must have suffering for the insult. Nothing will appease Him but agony. Christ appears as man's substitute, and—

> "Rich were the drops of Jesus' blood
> That calm'd his frowning face;
> That sprinkled o'er the burning throne,
> And turn'd the wrath to grace."

Such are the false views which some men have of God, and which, I regret to state, are found in the theology of some churches; and in the most loathsome forms are advocated as the doctrines of the Gospel by some of the preachers of the day. But however popular a minister may be who advocates such tenets, with my views of progress, I cannot regard him as helping on the world.

Since supreme sympathy with God is the necessary impulse to true progress, are not such views necessary hindrances to soul-advancement? For who can love a *revengeful,* a *callous,* or an *arbitrary* God? Men may hypocritically profess to love such a Being, and they may sing his praise with their lips; but the divine laws of their moral constitution will preclude, for ever, the rising of any grateful affection towards Him. The soul, instead of

following hard after such a God, will instinctively shun Him, and shrink away with horror and with hate. These ideas, which cover the Divine character with terrible thunder-clouds, must be swept away from the world's mind, and the Eternal must appear in the bright sunshine of his love, before humanity will ever ascend towards Him.

Let us notice—

Secondly: *Those which are wrong in relation to his service.* Amongst the many false ideas which are entertained about godliness, and which will be seen to be no feeble hindrances to progress, I shall briefly mention a few of the chief:—

1. *The view which regards the service of God more as a letter than a spirit.* There are many, in all churches, who *practically* attach far more importance to creeds and rituals than to the eternal principles of moral goodness; who are far more interested in the form than the substance—in the material symbol than in the spiritual idea. Practically, they declare that godliness consists mainly, at any rate, in adhesion to a system of doctrine, and in outward obedience to some rules of worship. Their religion is more a religion of documents, institutions, and church proprieties, than a religion of spirit and life. This view of religion belongs to no particular period or class. It is not only found amongst the Jews of olden time, in the Papal hierarchy, and oft in the Anglican Church, but amongst many of those Separatists who profess a more *spiritual* faith. "Wherever there is a field," says a modern writer, "we meet with weeds or thorns; and wherever humanity dwells, we witness, to some extent or another, formalism. We may travel over a large tract of inhabited country, and find there no such monster as absolute Atheism; we may

meet with large masses of men, among whom Pantheism or Naturalism has scarcely a local habitation; we may enter into one crowded congregation after another, and hear the doctrines of Socinianism, of a false spiritualism, and of irresponsibility, repudiated;—but formalism is a thing at hand as well as afar off. It lies everywhere about us, many-coloured and many-shaped;—sometimes gorgeously decked, and at other times meanly clad; sometimes prominently manifested, and at other times scarcely perceptible."*

Now, this view is an obstruction to true progress. It fetters the intellect, and is unfavourable to free inquiry; it kindles the fires of intolerance and persecution, and destroys the spirit of brotherhood. "It teaches men, in a thousand ways, to subordinate natural morality to ecclesiastical conventionalism—to regard the end as giving sanctity to the means."† The Jews, in the days of Christ, stand forth to all ages as proof of the absolute inimicalness of this view of religion to the progress of the soul. Sacred verbalism was the religion of these men. They lived in words. Their spiritual faculties, that should have swept with ample pinions the wide sky of truth, shrank into the cold and narrow shell of words. They looked at God, humanity, and the universe, through *words;* and through this misty medium the sublime LOGOS appeared to them a heretic, unworthy of life. Their whole history rings with the fact, "The letter killeth."

Another thing which is obstructive of progress is—

2. *The view which regards religion as a thing rather of*

* Rev. Thomas Pearson's "Prize Essay on Infidelity," p. 291.

† Dr. Vaughan on "Letter and Spirit."

miraculous production than of personal cultivation. As we have had occasion to refer to this idea before, the mention of it here must suffice. It is popular. Not a few, in all Christian communities, look upon religion as a mysterious something that is put into the mind at the period of regeneration, and which will keep on growing until it reaches perfection in the skies. Where it has been deposited it will continue; it will never be lost; and wherever it has taken root it will grow on to fruition. That godliness in man is something added to his nature I deny, but that it is ascribable to God I cheerfully and thankfully admit; but not in the sense of the idea in question.

The gifts of God to man may be divided into two classes: —those that are bestowed unconditionally, and those that are reached as the result of effort. Light, air, water, existence, too, with all its varied attributes and relationships—Jesus and the Bible—are of the former class. They are all conferred, not procured. Luxuriant crops, mental discipline, intellectual knowledge, are of the latter class. In the nature of things, they are only reached as the results of certain human operations. To this latter class godliness belongs. Men can only obtain it as the agriculturist gets his crops, or the scholar his knowledge—*by appropriate agency.*

But we mention this notion, as well as the other false ideas that we have referred to, or may yet notice, not for the purpose of refutation,—for neither our limits nor aim will admit of this—but simply to show that they are incompatible with progress. If I hold the idea that moral excellence, or godliness, is a something *miraculously* given to

me, rather than a *right* state of my native faculties and powers—which, under God, I am to bring about by diligent and prayerful discipline—I have neither the need nor the motive for any attempt at self-improvement. Hence it is that those who are under the influence of this idea, for the most part, do not apply themselves with that energy and perseverance to the means of mental and moral discipline, without the use of which it is impossible for the soul to advance.

Another obstruction is—

3. *The view which regards religion as pertaining to certain parts of life, rather than to the entire circle of existence.* In the estimation of some—and in the practice, perhaps, of most—godliness is a something which has a *special* relation to certain acts, places, and periods. It has more to do with worship than with business, with Sabbaths than week-days, with the temple than the market. You must be more religious in reading the Bible than in perusing other books; in talking about Scripture than in ordinary conversation; in treading the floor of an ecclesiastical building than in walking over the green earth of God. Hence, for the "secular" and the "spiritual"—the two departments into which man has foolishly divided the sphere of his life—different maxims are recognised, and different manners are assumed. As soon as he passes the line of division from the one to the other, he is metamorphosed; his gait, his tone, his face—all seem changed.

Now, who does not see that this idea is an obstruction to true progress? Unless I regard religion as the moral heart of man, as being everything or nothing, everywhere or

nowhere,—the organic life running into, fashioning, and colouring, every branch of human conduct—my path will be too misty and blocked up for progress.

Another obstructive view is—

4. *That which regards religion as a means to an end, rather than the highest end itself.* To numbers, religion is but a species of utilitarianism. It is adopted from the same spirit as a man enters upon a business or takes up a profession—for the sake of what is to be got by it. But this is a fundamental error; for there is nothing higher than godliness. It is greater than Heaven, for it involves it; it is greater than the universe, for it is the end of all creations, providences, revelations, influences, and agencies. "This *is* life eternal, to know Thee the only true God." He who makes it a means, makes it a minister to that *selfishness* of heart under whose influence the soul can never grow in true power, or attain to true blessedness. Selfishness is the torpedo of the soul. It is more, it is the atmosphere that nurses all the moral blights, pestilences, thunders, and lightnings in the creation.

But we have yet to notice, most briefly, the other class of wrong views,—namely, those which are WRONG IN THEIR NATURE. A man's views may be right in relation to the object—that is, the conception which he has may agree with the things to which they refer—and yet they may not be right in themselves. For the sake of illustrating this much overlooked, but momentous, distinction, let us notice two classes as examples:—

First: *Those which are dogmatic rather than convictional.* By *dogma*, I understand any opinion which is received more on the authority of others than as the result of self-searched

evidence—that is given rather than gained. A dogmatic idea may be true in relation to its object. The ideas contained in the creed of a church may be true in relation to their objects ; but if they are received merely on the authority of others, without *personal* investigation, they are utterly wrong in their nature. The very same truth which might be a mere dogma to one, may be an intelligent belief to another, and contrariwise. Your theological creeds to their authors were convictions—great soul-elevating realities; but if I receive them merely on *their* authority they are nothing but dead dogmas to me. And what is a conviction to me, if received on my *ipse dixit*, becomes a miserable dogma to the recipient. "In remote ages," says the philosophic Jouffroy, "in which the dogma had its birth, it was adopted because it appeared true. It was then believed for reasons that were known. Faith was alive. But the children of the first converts began to admit the dogma without verifying its claims—that is to say, to believe without comprehending their belief; and from that time the foundation of faith was changed. Instead of resting upon conviction it took its stand on authority, and was transformed into a habit. Thus—transmitted from generation to generation in consecrated words, and always less understood in proportion to its distance from its source—the moment at length arrives when the dogma governs only in appearance, because all of its truth has died out from the mind." These dogmatic views are *wrong*, because they imply mental indolence and servility. It is the prerogative and duty of every man, like the noble Bereans, to work out his own creed; to have a well-searched and understood reason for all the religious views which he entertains. He

who yields up his judgment to another, sins against his own nature and the divine order of society.

Now these *dogmatic* views I class amongst the greatest *obstructions* to true progress. Dogmas *intimidate* the soul. Your dogmatic men have ever been theological cowards. They are afraid of every new idea. The shadow of a new ism turns them pale; old Popery keeps them in a constant panic. Dogmas *enslave* the soul; they manacle its intellectual powers, and confine its spiritual sympathies. They foreclose all questions that seem not at once to harmonize with themselves. Dogmas *darken* the soul: they shut it in as with high massive walls, and admit no light from any heavenly orb but such as comes reflected through dim and narrow windows. Dogmas *dissocialize* the soul: they breathe into it the spirit of arrogant intolerance, and set it in *fiery wrath* against all who differ from it in opinion. They are a *stumbling-block* that must be removed before humanity can advance.*

Another class, which we shall take as an example of those views which are wrong in their nature, are—

Secondly: *Those that are occasional, rather than habitual, in their influence.* The religious ideas which occupy the mind only *occasionally*, however true they may be to their object, are false in their nature. A religious idea, to be *true*, must pass from the intellect into the heart, mix itself up with our consciousness, become a ruling principle, a habit, a part of ourselves. There are ideas which refer to objects that have no relation to the feelings of mankind. Such are mathematical ones. They may be *true* without touching the heart or influencing the conduct. But not so

* See "*Odium Theologicum.*"—"Homilist," vol. vi.

with religious ideas. They refer to objects that are related to our deepest feelings and profoundest interests, and they cannot be regarded as *true* unless they become everything to us. True religious faith is an "incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever."

We have thus referred to some of the most prominent and powerful obstructions to the true progress of man. And the worst feature of many of these is, that they have been consecrated by the Church. They are regarded as sacred things; yet they must be removed. They are clouds that must be swept from the sky before the life-giving and life-perfecting beams of the sun will fall upon men's hearts. They are bonds that must be burst asunder before the soul can go forth with full scope for its powers and in the majesty of its strength. They are thorns and thistles that must be uprooted before the spiritual germs of being shall become "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season." Hear the word of the Lord, ye teachers of religion! Ponder the texts.* "Cast ye up, cast ye up; prepare the way; take up the STUMBLING-BLOCK out of the way of my people." "*Make straight paths for your feet; lest that which is lame be turned out of the way.*"

* Isa. lvii. 14; Heb. xii. 13.

LECTURE XII.

THE CONTINUOUSNESS OF TRUE PROGRESS.

Is there any assurance that where progress has commenced it will be continued? There are three ways of looking at this subject, technically denominated, "final perseverance." First: It may be looked at as a scriptural doctrine. Secondly: As a moral duty. Thirdly: As an organic tendency. In the light of an organic tendency we shall look at the question as to the continuousness of true progress, and notice—I. That the principle of inquiry is an influential force in human nature, and true religion is suited to maintain a master-hold upon that. II. That the principle of love is a mighty power in human nature, and true religion is suited to maintain a master-hold upon that. III. That the principle of rightness is a powerful force in human nature, and true religion is suited to maintain a master-hold upon that. IV. That the principle of hope is a strong force in human nature, and true religion is suited to maintain a master-hold upon that. V. That the principle of habit is a powerful force in human nature, and true religion is suited to maintain a master-hold upon that.

THE CONTINUOUSNESS OF TRUE PROGRESS.

WE have glanced at some of the chief obstructions to true progress; and in reviewing them, we observe that there is one feature common to them all—they are all *human creations*. They are not like the steep hills of nature—obstacles which the Creator has thrown into the traveller's path. Most of them have been piled up by our own agency;—all of them continue by our own suffrage. Moral mountains depart, and moral hills remove, at the *fiat* of the earnest and devout soul that is pursuing its upward path. In sooth, the spirit, like the barque and the bird, makes her own path: it is hilly or plain, circuitous or straight, as she wills. In the way to wealth, to scholarship, to social power, and fame, there may be *insurmountable* difficulties; but not in the way of true spiritual elevation. At times, in your timid moods, obstructions may rise before you, like some huge mountain, throwing their gloomy shadow on your path;—but march on! "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

The question which now claims attention is, Is there any assurance that where progress has commenced it will be

continued? May it not be, that a soul may advance in all that is true and holy for a time, and then fall back to its original degradation, or sink to depths even deeper still? Is there any good reason to believe that if I am once in the right path I shall go on through the interminable ages of my future history? This question has divided churches, and been the battle-ground of some of those theological encounters which have dishonoured Christianity, by developing some of the worst passions of humanity in its holy cause.

There are three ways of looking at this subject, which is technically denominated "the final perseverance of saints." We may view it as a scriptural doctrine, as a moral duty, and as an organic tendency.

First: *It may be looked at as a scriptural doctrine.* This is the light in which it is popularly regarded, and in which all the controversy has been conducted. Those who view it in this aspect aver that the Bible teaches, that "Once in grace always in grace." Now, as we do not intend looking at the subject in this aspect, we need not commit ourselves to either side of the controversy;—still, in passing, we may suggest a question or two to those who are *positive* on the Calvinistic side: the side which, ingenuousness requires us to say, we are inclined to take.

We suggest, first, *Whether the amount of Scripture on the other side is not sufficient to maintain, at any rate, a doubt on the subject?* In carefully classifying and investigating the various scriptures bearing on the point, we discover that whilst, perhaps, the larger part seem to teach the doctrine of "final perseverance," as it is called, yet that there is such a very large number of bold and solemn passages stating,

or implying, the possibility and danger of a *final declension*, as to leave ample room for *honest* doubt. According to the Bible showing, it seems impossible, therefore, for either party to reach demonstration; and there is no ground for positivism in either case. Hence the most enlightened and honest Biblical students are divided on the subject.

We suggest, secondly, *Whether many of the chief arguments of those who maintain "final perseverance" are not sufficient to strengthen the doubt?* Dr. Dwight we regard as one of the most able and eloquent advocates of the doctrine, and yet his arguments in support of it are, for the most part, very inconclusive. "It is irrational," says he, "to suppose that God would leave a work, towards which so much has been done, unaccomplished." This is the first of his five arguments. But there is no force in this argument, unless it could be shown that God finishes every work He begins. The world and history, however, are full of Divine works unfinished. In the vegetable creation how much beauty is destroyed in the bud—how much fruit in the blossom! In the animal department, what a large proportion of every species, especially of the human, die before they reach maturity! God brought the thousands of Israel from Egyptian bondage in order to conduct them into Canaan, but none of the emancipated ones entered the promised land save Caleb, and Joshua the son of Nun. In the moral world have not spirits of various ranks fallen from primitive rectitude and peace? "The continuance of saints in holiness follows irresistibly from their election." This is another of his arguments, but it is a mere fallacy, which logicians denominate a *petitio principii*. The very thing to be proved is assumed—namely, that God has chosen all the

regenerated ones to eternal life. "If Christians continue not in holiness unto the end, the intercession of Christ will be frustrated." This is the Doctor's third argument. Assuming that Christ has prayed that all who have believed should be saved, it is still a question whether all Christ's prayers *must* be answered. He prayed for the removal of the bitter cup. Was that cup removed? He prayed for the forgiveness of his enemies. Were they all forgiven? "If the holiness of Christians does not continue unto the end, the joy of Heaven over their conversion is groundless and in vain." This is his fourth argument. The fact that angels do rejoice in man's conversion is no argument, unless it could be proved that a change of mind, in the case of man, from evil to good, even of a *temporary* duration, is not an object worthy of angelic joy; and also that angels are never disappointed in their hopes. Who will undertake the demonstration of either of these opinions? And yet without their demonstration where is the force of the Doctor's argument? "That the holiness of Christians should not continue to the end, is inconsistent with many scriptural declarations and promises." This is the fifth and last argument. That the non-continuance of Christians in holiness is inconsistent with many scriptures is readily granted, but their *necessary* continuation in holiness is also inconsistent "with many scriptures." And, therefore, it is a choice of difficulties.

We have brought forward these arguments in favour of final perseverance, not in order, *formally*, to refute them. We think that the few brief words with which they have been despatched are sufficient to suggest to free and thoughtful minds their unsoundness. Nor have we done so

in order to reflect upon the logical acuteness or Christian candour of their venerated author. For no theological system-maker have we a greater respect than for Dr. Dwight. He is more philosophic in thought, generous in spirit, and eloquent in style, than most of his class. In our younger days we perused his works with interest, and his memory is dear to us still. Far from us is the thought of writing a sentence to dim the reputation, or lessen the influence, of one who nobly did his work, and is now no more. But we have referred to these points merely to suggest to the *dogmatic* advocates of "final perseverance" whether, When the arguments of the most able and illustrious advocates of the doctrine are defective, the Bible is as clear upon the subject as they affirm?

We may suggest, thirdly, *Whether there is not wisdom in the fact—supposing it to be a fact—that the Bible leaves the subject in something of uncertainty?* Let us suppose that the proposition, that he who once begins the life of holiness must continue holy for ever, had been written in the Bible, as with a sunbeam, so that all room for the slightest doubt were precluded. Would not serious evils have been likely to arise from it? Would not the sense of individual responsibility be weakened? If the Bible revealed to us, in the most clear and unmistakable way, that there was an *absolute certainty that the mind, once put into a certain train of thought and action, would continue in that train for ever*, we should certainly have something like a ground for questioning our moral agency;—for does not moral agency consist in the power to break through the divine boundary of our being, and to change our course? You may predicate of material bodies, that when once set in motion in a certain

line, under given circumstances, they must continue moving in that line for ever. They have no inward impulse or power to counteract the outward forces that are bearing them on. But to predicate that of moral mind would be a contradiction. Hence, if the Bible taught it so that it could admit of no question, man might justly infer that he was not an agent, but an instrument; not a moral personality, moving freely through the universe and responsible for his deeds, but a mere wheel in one of nature's machines, propelled along by forces over which it had no control. And with this impression, where would be the motive to the cultivation of excellence? Would there not be, in everything a reckless indifference? While we do not say, therefore, that the Scriptures do not teach the doctrine, we do say that they do not teach it so clearly as to admit of no doubt, and that the very doubt is *useful.*

What! it may be asked, Are you throwing suspicion on the doctrines of the Bible? Would you have us to entertain doubts about the great verities of revelation? No; solemnly no! We would have you strive heartily for certitude on every point; but we say, that where there does not seem sufficient evidence for certitude, we would rather have honest doubtings than proud dogmatizing. The latter is an evil in itself, and consequently its history is but a history of evil. But the former is not so. *Doubt,* in itself, is no absolute evil, but may be a blessing. It is a condition of finite intellect. The highest created human spirit doubts. Honest doubt stimulates inquiry and develops caution; it keeps the eyes open, and the loins girded, ready to move on with new light. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

Another aspect in which this subject may be viewed is—

Secondly: *As a moral duty.* To love God supremely is a duty we read in the Decalogue, and feel in our souls. It is the spirit and summary of all excellence. This obligation, which meets us at the dawn of reason, augments with every successive period of our being. Every moment brings some new mercy, and every new mercy increases our obligation to love and serve our Maker. Are not those holy and lofty intelligences, who have been advancing in truth and greatness for ages, perhaps antecedent to the creation of man, more bound to "persevere" in religion now than ever?

Now, we think that this is a far more useful aspect of the subject than the former. We deem the subject of "final perseverance" more suitable for the *code* than the *creed.* Faith in its *oughtness* is likely to be of far greater service to a man than faith in its *certainty.* The former will stimulate to increased devotedness; the latter *may,* through a false dependence upon an outward agency, lead to apathy and indifference. Indeed, I cannot see of what service, in spiritual discipline, this subject can become as a speculative doctrine. The question that influences a truly virtuous soul is not, "Lord, shall I be happy for ever, or not?" but, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" May not the genuineness of that man's piety be fairly questioned who wants the subject of "final perseverance" preached to him as a speculative doctrine for comfort? And may not that preacher's intelligence and wisdom, if not faithfulness, also be fairly questioned who does so? I see not how, with any propriety or hope of usefulness, I could say to a man, however holy and good, My brother, you are *destined* to persevere in holiness, when I know that

he is a free agent, that he can change his mind, and that others, holier than himself, have done so. But I can see how, with the greatest reason and prospect of doing good, I can say to him, My brother, you are *bound* to persevere in holiness; woe be to you if you cease to "give all diligence to make your calling and election sure!" True "comfort," I am persuaded, is to be had in the persevering *effort*, and not in the persevering *dogma*. In the *deed* alone true blessedness resides.

The other aspect in which this subject may be looked upon is—

Thirdly: *As an organic tendency*. By this, we mean that the soul, under the controlling influence of true religious sympathies, has an inherent inclination to march in the right line of being for ever. Take the tree in the text* as an illustration. It is "planted by waters"; its roots penetrate the living element, and drink up the necessary nutriment. These waters are not a mere pool, which continues only in the rainy season, and is dried up in the heat of summer, but a "river," rolling its deep wave of life with unremitting constancy from month to month, and from year to year. Such a tree must grow. "It shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." "It is even so," saith the prophet, with "the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." Such a man's soul is so conditioned, is placed amidst such circumstances, is rooted by such an ever-flowing river of Divine Life, that it shall not cease from yielding "the fruits of righteousness." Aye, its *continued* spiritual advancement is *more certain* than the continued growth of

* Jer. xvii. 8.

that highly-favoured tree. That tree, however nourishing its soil and salubrious its circumstances, lacks the *innate capability* for indefinite growth. Though it may flourish for ages, it is destined, in some future period, to die from *self-exhaustion*. But not so with the soul: it has within it the "*incorruptible* seed" of life. It grows young with age, and strong with work.

Now, it is in the light of this *organic tendency* that I wish to look at the question as to the *continuousness* of true progress. It is because this is not the light in which this subject is ordinarily viewed—indeed, we are not aware of any work which so exhibits it—and because we think that, in this aspect, it assumes a meaning thoroughly consonant with our common consciousness, and therefore peculiarly forcible and *practical*, that we are induced thus to regard it.

We shall endeavour to show that godliness takes such a thorough hold upon all the great and deeply seated principles of our nature, so fastens itself upon the entire soul, that the high probability is, that where it has once commenced it will continue. We go on, therefore, to observe—

I. *That the principle of inquiry is an influential force in human nature, and true religion is suited to maintain a master-hold upon that.* There is a strong desire in man for understanding the nature, causes, uses, and relations of things. Unlike the brute—to use the language which we have elsewhere employed—we are not content with the impressions which external phenomena make upon the senses; they start a number of questions, after whose solution we begin to struggle. The principle which impels us to this may be called curiosity in common life, inquiry in metaphysics, causality in phrenological speculation; but in all

it is the one self-same principle, felt by every heart, and acknowledged as instinctive by every thinker. It is the soul of the understanding. It opens the eye and plumes the pinions of the intellect; it keeps the *wherefore* ever on the lip; it moves upward from particular facts to general truths—from the falling apple to the monarch force. Impelled by its restless impulse, we step up the ladder of secondary causes toward the broad blue heavens of universal laws. It is the parent of all those scientific discoveries whose practical application to daily life have made the civilized world what it is. Telegraphs, railroads, and steam engines, are but ideas brought down by studious minds from those far-up regions of thought into which this potent instinct had lifted them. Thus the cause-inquiring student, living in the obscurity of solitude, reaches those general truths, which, although pronounced visionary impracticabilities by his contemporaries, become, in after ages, popular facts and mighty impulses to propel the world in its advancing march. Great ideas are ever born in the upper realms of abstraction; and it is not until these *potent intangibilities* have learnt the language of common life, so as to speak familiarly to men, that they are invited to come down from their ethereal state, and incarnate themselves in some new body, whose young energies shall help the world in its daily work.

But are we to judge of the power of this principle by the intellectual history of the people? No; for the circumstances under which, alas! they have grown up, have all tended to weaken and degrade it in them. But we would have you estimate its power by the work it achieves, and the influence it exerts, where it has been allowed its

proper scope, and had its proper exercise. Take the scholars and sages who have obeyed its noblé dictates, and you will find that they regard their study as the chief haunt of pleasure, and class *contemplation* amongst the greatest charms and attractions of life. That branch of study to which they have given themselves—whether language, or history, or science, or philosophy—draws the whole soul after it. Nay, in it they live.

Now, the question is, Is godliness capable of maintaining a master-hold upon this powerful element of our nature? If not, there would be a probability of final *declension;* for should some greater *intellectual* attraction present itself to the soul, then, from the force of this inquiring principle it would be enticed away. But there is *no* greater intellectual attraction. We proclaim this with all the emphasis of conscious certitude. Does godliness proscribe any field of thought? Does it bolt any of the golden gates of science? No; it throws open the whole domain of truth, and spreads it forth, not only in all its amplitude to the mind, but in lights and colours of special fascination and charm. The mind, under its influence, puts God, the object of its supreme affection, in the centre of all science, and looks at every fact and principle in the enrapturing light of His glory. The mere speculative theist "looks through nature up to nature's God;" but the truly godly thinker feels that God is, both philosophically and emotionally, nearer to him than nature; and he looks *through God down upon nature's mighty realms*, and thus increases the charms of nature a thousandfold. Does not the picture appear in new beauties, after love for the artist has risen in the heart of the spectator? And does not the universe burst into

new glories upon the vision of that man in whose heart supreme love for the Creator has been produced?

But it may be said—Granting that godliness lays open all the realms of science, and heightens, incomparably, its charms—may it not be that, in the course of time, the intellect may become so conversant with all truth as to have neither need nor motive for future inquiry, and religion thereby lose this master-hold upon man's love of inquiry? We think not. Who shall count the number of God's works, or describe the vastness of his universe? The oldest student-spirit in the creation — who, peradventure, began his researches into the ways of God myraids of ages ere man was made—knows, perhaps, comparatively little of what the Infinite has wrought. There are depths he has never fathomed, heights he has never scaled, worlds and systems over which he has never swept his lustrous wing. Still it may be said, if the investigating spirit is to live for ever, all of the Divine workmanship that now is will one day be fully explored. True. But is not the "fountain of life" every moment pouring forth new streams of being? Is not the work of creation a constantly progressing work? And, then, has not He, the primordial subject of all thought, an infinitude of truth in his *own* being?

We observe—

II. *That the principle of love is a mighty power in human nature, and true religion is suited to maintain a master-hold upon that.* Love is the spring and spirit of the universe; and, thank God, it is, notwithstanding our depravity, the strongest force in our nature. It greets us into life; in its warm caresses we spend the childhood of our days; and

through each successive period, to the grave, it appears to us in a thousand angel-forms, soothing us with its tender words, blessing us with its gifts, and brightening our path with its genial smiles. Need I, in order to illustrate its wondrous power, refer to those daring adventures and romantic self-sacrifices recorded in the narratives of "lovers?" Or to those noble and self-devoting deeds of patriots, philanthropists, and heroes, which are emblazoned in history and sung in verse? No; I need merely point to the unwritten history of *mothers* around you, and the countless sacrifices of friendship in common life. It is a cord which links souls together, fine as gossamer, but mightier than adamant. It is something stronger than death. Oceans cannot quench its holy fires. It is a deep current running through the heart of humanity,—bearing on its resistless wave not a mere faculty of the man, but the man *himself*.

Now, godliness calls out this powerful element in our nature in its two most powerful forms—namely, *gratitude and admiration*.

How powerfully does *gratitude* bind us to our benefactors. The language of the heart to such is, "Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee." Kindness is *might* of the highest order. By it we can take hold of men's strength, grasp their very souls, and bind them to us by indissoluble bonds. What a spiritual sovereignty did the patriarch of Uz wield over his contemporaries! "The young men saw me, and hid themselves, and the aged arose and stood up. The princes refrained talking, and laid their hands upon their mouth. The nobles held their peace, and their tongues cleaved to

the roof of their mouth. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me." What was the cause of this regal influence? "*Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help.*"

Nor is love, in the form of *admiration*, a weaker force. When it is directed to artistic beauty it is powerful; when it is directed to natural beauty it is more powerful still; but when it is directed to moral beauty it is most powerful of all. Beauty carries captive the soul. The fine painting is attractive; the magnificent landscape more attractive still; the true hero, the embodiment of the highest *moral* qualities, is most attractive of all.

So long, therefore, as the *supreme* love of gratitude and admiration are directed to God, the soul must, from its very nature, be vitally allied to Him. And is not this love, where it has once been awakened, likely to continue? Were the GREAT ONE to become malevolent, or cease to bestow favours, gratitude might expire; or were He to appear odious, or to conceal the moral beauty of his character, admiration might die away. But this will never, *can* never, be the case. He will always be showering new mercies on the path of the godly, and appear to their spiritual vision in forms of ever-increasing loveliness. "*Who then shall separate us from the love of God?*"

We observe—

III. *That the principle of rightness is a powerful force in human nature, and true religion is suited to maintain a masterhold upon that.* That man has within him a something which concerns itself with the right and wrong of action, is too universally admitted to require, or even to justify,

in this place, any attempt at a formal demonstration. This something, it is true, in the vast majority of cases, is dormant; but, in all cases, it is not only capable of being awakened, but is destined to be awakened; and when awakened, it becomes an all-dominant energy. Men under the influence of conscience have voluntarily braved the greatest perils, endured the greatest sufferings, and made the greatest sacrifices. They have hailed death in its darkest and most terrible forms at the bidding of this moral instinct. The love which is not agreeable to this sentiment is not likely to be permanent, and no course of action which meets not with its concurrence is likely to be persevered in. Instances are constantly transpiring of individuals relinquishing attachments and retiring from lucrative and secularly honourable engagements, at the mandate of an awakened conscience. Looking at the power and the history of this element of our nature, there is a high probability that those attachments and enterprises will be lasting, which secure its entire sympathy and sanction. And are not such pre-eminently the attachments and enterprises of a truly godly life? Does not conscience, this monarch energy of the soul, not only sanction supreme love to God, and entire consecration to his service, but imperiously *demand* it? A godly life is backed by conscience, an ever-flowing and all but resistless tide; and the good man must battle fiercely with its surging billows if he would relapse into the ways of sin again. He can retrograde only by treading conscience down.

We observe—

IV. *That the principle of hope is a strong force in human nature, and true religion is suited to maintain a master-hold*

upon that. Whether hope is an original and distinct emotion, or as Dr. Thomas Brown considers it, one of the forms in which all our desires are capable of existing, is a question of no practical importance. Hope is an *expectant desire.* It is not a mere desire, for we may desire many things which there is no reason to expect we shall ever have: nor is it mere expectation, for we expect many things which we can never desire—such as infirmities, sufferings, and death; but hope is a compound of desire and expectation. It is, as we have said, an expectant desire.

Whatsoever its nature, all are conscious of its magic force. All know how it bears the spirit into the future, and what a bright future it paints to the heart. The best and choicest blessings are ever in the region of hope—a region all flowers and fruit, and sunshine; across whose beauteous landscapes there never sweeps the withering blight or the furious storm, and whose suns and stars are never dimmed by cloud or mist. All know how, by the thoughts it borrows from the future and makes to play "with a delightful illusion around the heart," it brightens our hours of sorrow, and nerves us with new energy in the day of toil. The poor are charmed with the waving crops of plenty it unfolds, captives are cheered with its sweet song of dawning liberty, and the sufferers on the bed of languishing get serenity and strength at the prospect of returning health.

Now, the probability of a man's *continuance* in any enterprise depends greatly upon its connection with hope. Half the working world toil on in their respective lines of action, not for the sake of *present* results, but for the sake of what hope has promised them in the future. Prospective gains

often stimulate to continued application, even under present losses. The question is, What connection has the godly life with this hope? Does the religious enterprise hold out any bright prospect? If, in connection with religion, there should ever come a time when there was nothing more to expect, godliness would lose much of its power over man, and there would be a strong probability of a relapse. But if the prospect widened and brightened as the man advanced, would not the chances of retrogression decrease with every successive step? This is just the fact in a religious life. The more actually attained, the more prospectively appears. The course of a godly soul is something like that of the traveller who, in a summer's morning, scales some delightful hill;—the prospect expands and blooms with every advancing step; the higher he ascends, the more he sees to enchant. Never was the region of hope so vast and glorious to the patriarchs—the spiritual ancestry of the mighty good, as now. The language of John—"it doth not yet appear what we shall be"—is more applicable to them now than ever. Blessed hope!

> "Still to them it whispers promised pleasure,
> And bids the lovely scenes at distance hail!"

We observe—

V. *That the principle of habit is a powerful force in human nature, and true religion is suited to maintain a master-hold upon that.* We may differ in our definition of habit. Some may regard it as an original element in man—a native force; and others, a power which inheres rather in the action than the agent—a power born and nursed in action; but, all will agree in regarding it as an *ever-growing tendency to repeat ourselves*—to do what we have already done. In itself,

it is one of the greatest blessings of existence. Its function is most useful to us, whose progress in true greatness and joy depends on *work*:—for in work alone man develops his powers, gets strength, and reaches the true ideal of life. My faith is, that nowhere but in the vineyard of labour can I find the true paradise of being.

This habit helps me, as a *worker*, in two ways:—it increases both my *aptitude and inclination* for labour. Habit increases our facilities for work. The architect, the artist, the statesman, the author, the preacher—all feel their work more easy as they *repeat* their efforts. What at first was difficult and imperfectly performed, by habit becomes easy, and is executed with all the grace of finish. Thus, by habit, our labour in the great field of destiny becomes easier with every progressive stroke. But this is not all. In connection with the increased facility there comes also the increased *disposition*. Man gets a strong tendency to do that which he has pleasantly performed before. These passing remarks are offered because habit is popularly associated with what is bad; whereas it is one of the greatest blessings of beings like ourselves, whose destiny depends on *work*.

The power of this principle is universally acknowledged, and in some cases it is felt to be invincible. In the history of sin, its force is the most striking. All the crimes in the long black narrative of human guilt you may trace, in a great measure, to habit. For sin springs not from *constitutional* impulses:—all the deep-seated instincts of our nature are against it. Men, at first, under the impulse of some strong temptation, so rebel against their nature, that they swear, lie, or get intoxicated. They *repeat* the deeds,

and habit goes on to transform them into swearers, liars, drunkards. The youth, anxious to be thought a man, hurries to put on the man's conventional manners. He, simple soul, considers smoking a symbol of manhood, and tries the act at which his nature sickens and revolts, and tries, and sickens again—and still again; at length the habit makes him a smoker, and the narcotic weed becomes his imperious lord. Thus—

> "Crimes lead to greater crimes, and link so straight:
> What first was *accident* at *last* is fate."

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? If so, then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." Every sinful act is another cord woven into that mighty cable of habit, which binds the spirit to the throne of darkness. It is a fresh momentum added to the falling soul.

Now, if habit is so powerful in binding to sin, our position is, that it becomes *more* powerful in binding to *holiness*. Suppose two men of equal nature, power, education, age—equal, in fact, in all but character. The one has pursued a course of sin from the dawn of reason, the other a course of virtue and godliness. The question is —Over which shall *habit* have the greater power in binding him to his wonted course? In which man's course has habit put the greater difficulty to conversion? In other words, which is the more likely to change his course of life? I say the former. Why do I think so?

First: Because, in the one case, the man's conscience—the very root of his spiritual nature—is in favour of his present course, and against change; in the other case, the

whole force of this conscience is against the present mode of life, and is perpetually demanding reformation.

Secondly: Because in the one case, divine influence is ever present to stimulate, and to cheer the spirit on; but in the other, the whole tide of this influence rolls in powerful opposition.

Thirdly: Because, in the one case, there are no *unquestionable* instances of change; in the other, instances abound on every hand. Every conversion to God is an example. Habit, therefore, which is so powerful to bind the sinner to his sin, *is far more powerful to bind the saint to holiness.*

We have thus referred to a few of those powerful principles in our nature on which godliness takes such a mighty hold, in order to show not the absolute certainty, but the high probability, of *continuousness in true progress.*

The fact is, there is not a single power within us that true religion does not penetrate and grasp. It takes hold upon the soul, as the germinating influences of nature penetrate and compass the seed which the husbandman has committed to the well-cultivated soil: it touches every particle, and will draw forth every latent energy into new and perfect forms of life.

But how stands the fall of angels, and of Adam, in relation to this argument? Is there a greater probability that man, brought under the influence of godliness *now*, will continue to advance, than there was that Adam would have retained his pristine innocence, or fallen angels have kept their "first estate"? Had not our progenitors, and those angelic spirits, those inward forces of soul of which we have spoken, and upon which their godliness fastened; and was there not an organic tendency in favour of their

continued progress, equal in power to that which is in favour of the continued progress of redeemed men? We think not.

There are, at least, two moral forces in favour of *redeemed* man's continued progress, which neither angels nor Adam possessed before the fall.

First: *The power of experience.* All moral beings learn and improve by *experience.* The past life supplies them with much wherewith to correct what is wrong, and to stimulate what is right. Now, there is a virtue-impelling power in the past experience of *redeemed* man which neither angels nor Adam ever had. When the thought of transgressing first entered the minds of celestial spirits, they knew nothing *experimentally* of the evils of sin; they knew nothing of the floods of woe that it would bring upon their being. In their past experience there was nothing but bright sunshine of joy. They never felt a pang; they had no beacon to warn them of their danger. There was no hell, flaming either in their memory or in the universe, when they sinned. But it is not so when the tempting thought enters the heart of a *redeemed* man. He has an experience full of warnings. He has known something of what the bitterness of sin is. Is not the child who has put his little hand to the fire and been burnt, more likely to avoid the devouring element than he who has never felt the fiery pang? The proverb says, "A burnt child dreads the fire." Were the fallen spirits to be converted, lifted from their hell, and placed on the thrones which once they occupied—What could tempt them to rebel again? Ah! What? How would their past experience bind them to their recovered rectitude!

Secondly: *The power of mediation.* The incarnation, works, teachings, prayers, sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ, constitute a new chapter in the history of the universe—a chapter which seems to us to contain more repellents to vice, and more incentives to virtue, than are found in all creation's volumes beside. Mediation is the most potent form of divine utterance, the most illustrious display of the divine character, the mightiest organ of divine energy. It is a special channel for the express purpose, not only of transmitting divine influences to sustain holy spirits in goodness, but of raising sinful spirits to holiness. The influences that stream through this, give, as it were, a new magnetism to all the scenes of holiness, to bind the spirits of purity faster to their spheres. But neither Adam nor the fallen angels had the advantage of this. It is a new chapter, written since the fall. The wondrous and thrilling *phenomenon* of a "lamb as it had been slain in the midst of the throne" with "scars of honour in his flesh and triumph in his eyes," had not appeared when they departed from the line of holiness and truth. A mighty soul-preserving power is this mediation—a power which they never had; otherwise, Would they have fallen?

But enough on this branch of our subject. Sufficient has been said to show that there is such a strong tendency in true godliness to self-preservation as to render continuous progress, to say the least, highly probable.

LECTURE XIII.

THE SYMPTOMS OF TRUE PROGRESS.

Is there any possibility of ascertaining whether we are in the line of true progress? Yes. There are criteria by which we can be assured of this fact. What are not true criteria? First: Prosperity in secular undertakings is no infallible symptom of true progress. Secondly: A desire for heavenly blessedness is no infallible symptom of true progress. Thirdly: A conventional morality is no infallible symptom of true progress. Fourthly: Great susceptibility of impressions under the ministry of the gospel is no infallible symptom of true progress. What are, then, signs of true progress? The following things are infallible symptoms; inasmuch, as they are essentially associated with the impulse of true progress; viz., supreme sympathy with God. I. An increasing tendency to view all subjects in their connection with God. II. An increasing interest in men, in proportion to their love of, and likeness to, God. III. An increasing power over circumstances. IV. An increasing desire to render acceptable service to The Supreme. V. An increasing consciousness of God's presence. VI. An increasing superiority to all self-seeking. VII. An increasing assimilation to the Divine character.

THE SYMPTOMS OF TRUE PROGRESS.

WE have seen that, even on philosophical grounds, there is a high probability—we say no more—that where true progress has commenced, it will continue for ever; that each successive step of advancement decreases the probability of a retrogression, and even of a pause. The progress of the soul is something unique. It is not like the progress of planets—they run in circles; their course is an eternal careering through the same scenes and circumstances. When they have once swept their spheric pathways, though they move for ever, their age of novelty is over; henceforth, on them the same ether will breathe, and the same suns will shine. But the soul, in every stage of growth, rises into a new sphere of conscious being. In each original thought it soars to a new orbit, and rolls through a new and brighter firmament; in every fresh resolve it feels an out-birth into another and a higher world. Nor is the progress of the soul exactly like that of the tree. The tree exhausts itself in growing; its growth is but a progress to decay and destruction. Though it flourish for a thousand years, it has an end; death will seize it, root and branch, and crumble it to dust. But the soul contains inexhaustible germs, and when it is under the influence of godliness, it is placed amidst inexhaustible

elements of nutrition; it is rooted beside the eternal river of infinite truth and love. Its progress, indeed, is more like the progress of the little stone in the prophet's dream, than aught else which I can think of. That stone moved by its own force, and grew as it moved; it swelled in every revolution, it expanded to a mountain, it penetrated the clouds—it filled the world. It stopped in its growth, because its motion ceased; it ceased in its motion because it had filled its sphere. It is even so with a holy soul; it moves by its *own* force; it expands as it moves, and it will move for ever—if it have space; and space it will have, for its sphere is The Illimitable. Here we have touched the margin of the profoundest poetry of our being; and if our imagination cross the line, and enter the mystic realm, we shall sit mute in wonder. The idea of infinitude seals the lips, and stops the pen.

We pass now to another branch of our subject, namely, the *Symptoms of True Progress.* Is there any possibility of ascertaining whether we are in the line of true progress? Or is it a matter over which there hangs the impenetrable veil of mystery, and upon which we are doomed to doubt? No. There need be no doubt on the subject. There are criteria by which we may pronounce the most satisfactory judgment. What are they? This is the problem with which we have now to deal. And because there are "false signs" frequently believed in, we must, in giving ourselves to this confessedly serious question, begin with the negations of the subject. We must, therefore, observe—

First: *Prosperity in secular undertakings is no infallible symptom of true progress.* We have already seen "that progress in the accumulation of wealth, is not the progress of

man." We now aver, that it is neither sign nor evidence of it. *A priori*, indeed, we might have inferred that under the government of a just and merciful Sovereign, we should ever find moral creatures prosperous in all their circumstances, in proportion to their virtue. We should take their houses, estates, secular possessions, and enjoyments, as a fair measure of their moral state and standing. There is a tendency in man thus to judge. You see it, not only in the reasoning of Job's friends; in the autobiographic plaints of Asaph; and in the sentiment of the Jews of old, who considered those sinners more than the rest on whom the tower of Siloam fell, and whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices; but also in much of the despondency of the poor, and in the self-gratulation of the rich, of all times. All history, however, opposes this reasoning. Wicked men, in all ages, like the men of Sodom, have lived in external scenes and circumstances, fair and fruitful "even as the garden of the Lord." The fact is that, Nature, from whose ample storehouse all wealth is drawn, distributes her blessings independently of *moral* character. Those who will attend most rigidly to her laws, whether they be good or bad, shall fare the best. The farmer, however great a saint, if he neglect the proper laws of agriculture, shall have no crop; but, however satan-like, if he attend to these, his land shall "bring forth plentifully." Nature pays no deference to piety. Her seas will engulph the holiest mariner, and her soil will starve the holiest farmer if he neglect her commands.

And then, too, such are the *commercial* conditions on which wealth is obtained in this age of chicanery and competition, that it frequently happens that the man who is the

most destitute of refined feeling and high moral principle will succeed the best if he be equally skilful in his plans and indefatigable in their execution. Large fortunes, probably, are as often the fruits of vice as of virtue. What dastardly craftiness, what base prevarications, what a heartless trampling upon all the principles of fair dealing and social rectitude would an analysis of their history, in many cases, develop! Less conscience the better, my friend, sometimes, if thou wouldst be a hero in the mart and a distinguished victor in the campaign for wealth.

Secondly: *A desire for heavenly blessedness is no infallible symptom.* What is called "heavenly mindedness" is frequently nothing more than a form of avarice. I often see the same spirit in the prayers, aspirations, and labours for Heaven, as I see in that grasping secularist, who lays out his whole time, faculties, and being, for filthy lucre. There are hundreds of men belonging to churches who get tired of this world because it does not make them happy enough, and who selfishly long for another to make them more so. Nothing is more natural to the poor selfish heart on the bed of suffering than to create visions of some bright Heaven, and to express vehement longings for its enjoyment. The cry for happiness is the cry of nature, not the cry of virtue. Virtue is happy in duty—virtue is self-forgetfulness. The truly virtuous soul is ever *in* paradise, under the clustered branches of the tree of knowledge and the tree of life. Its stand-place is in the "presence" of the *absolute one;* and in "his presence there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

I am aware that the rapturous views of Heaven, and the

irrepressible desires for its enjoyment, which are oftentimes expressed on death-beds, and which are wont to be recorded in the memoirs of some men, are regarded as signs of spiritual growth, as unmistakable as they are delightful. But for reasons already intimated, it seems to me, that such phenomena can be far more philosophically traced to the influence of self-love upon the excited brain of a suffering and dying frame, than to a soul absorbed, as all truly virtuous souls are, in loving thoughts of God. Such glowing expressions have often fallen from the lips of men whose lives were evidently mercenary and mean.

Thirdly: *Conventional morality, however perfect, is no infallible symptom of true progress.* Let a man be amiable in temper, respectful in demeanour, commercially honest in all his transactions, regular in his attendance on the formalities of religion, a liberal subscriber to charitable institutions, and society will canonize him as a saint of the first class. But is he, necessarily, either a good or a great man on this account? Nay, the standard he has conformed to is not infallible; and were it so, he may have conformed to it from motives which are foreign to all that is truly virtuous. Pride, fear, or selfishness may stimulate a man to meet the claims of public sentiment. Conventional morality we decry not, it may be advantageous—advantageous both to the individual and to society; but it may, also, be destitute of a single element of moral excellence. Your conventional princes are often moral paupers, and your conventional saints are often amongst the darkest types of sin. Whom society denounces in one age it deifies in the next, and *vice versâ*.

Fourthly: *Great susceptibility of impression under the*

ministry of the Gospel is no infallible symptom of true progress. Tenderness of spirit is one of the greatest blessings of our existence; it is that which gives poetry and power to our thoughts, and charms to our life. The intellect, without feeling, is like the tree in winter, barren, though strong and stately. It is feeling that robes it in beauteous foliage, makes it efflorescent and fruitful. But sensibility, though a blessing, is not necessarily a virtue. There are often deep emotions felt under the ministry of the word where there is no true godly sympathy. "There is nothing," says an able religious writer, "of which there is so great a variety, in this weeping world, as tears; and a very careful analysis is needed to determine if they are genuine.—Observe, therefore, *first*, that it may have been some adjunct, or subordinate part of the Gospel such as the meeting with deceased Christian friends in The Heavenly Kingdom, by the representation of which the heart was affected, and not the essential truth of the Gospel, consisting of the proclamation that God's mercy has provided a Saviour for sinners.—Observe, *secondly*, that though it was *the* essential truth which was being preached, it may have been the *manner* in which it was illustrated, and not in its *substance*, by which you were affected—the golden *setting*, and not the precious stone itself—the dramatic representation of the woes of the Man of sorrows, exciting your imagination like the tale of the distress of the heroine of the novel.—Observe, *thirdly*, that it may be the *circumstances* which are associated with the truth, rather than the truth itself, which have excited your interest. The kindness of a master will cause a servant to be a zealous partizan of his employer's opinions, and to be delighted

with their advocacy;—and a young man making his suit to a young woman of piety, will, for the time, feel deeply interested in those evangelical doctrines which she admires, through sympathy with her mind, when he has no love of the truth for its own sake; as will be evinced, when, having turned to another object of affection, of different principles, the same sympathy shall induce him to deride what he formerly esteemed."*

We might proceed further to show, that not *an extensive acquaintance with theological truth, nor a self-denying zeal in the promotion of our religious views, nor the highest opinion which others may form of our character, constitutes any sure evidence of true progress.* But to dwell upon these points would be to traverse some portion of the path over which we have walked already.† We must pass, therefore, to the *positive* side of the question. What are the signs of true progress?

Now, there is only one way of determining, with accuracy, the question before us, and that is by the "master impulse of true progress." The presiding sympathy of the soul is the essence of character; and the essence of character, like the vital sap of trees, shows itself in fruit. Such a sympathy is the moral life of man, and this, as well as every other kind of life, has attributes and habits peculiar to itself. A man's predominant disposition circulates through the whole of his conscious existence, shapes every branch, and tinges every leaf of conduct. If, therefore, SUPREME SYMPATHY WITH GOD is the necessary spring and spirit of true progress,—which we have elsewhere endeavoured to

* Anderson, on "Regeneration."

† See the chapter on "The Theory of True Progress," pp. 149—173.

establish,* we may state the following things as *infallible symptoms*, inasmuch as they are essentially associated with such a state of mind.

I. *An increasing tendency to view all subjects in their connection with God.* By a law of mind we are ever disposed to look on general subjects, in their connection with the object we love most, however remote their relation to it may be. We connect the artist we love, with every line and shade of his picture, the architect we love, with every part of the edifice, the conqueror we love, with all the incidents of his campaign. We cannot look at the work of a man we greatly love without bringing its author to it. The heart will link them together in thought, though separated by leagues of distance, or the gulf of death. In like manner, the man who loves God supremely, will bring Him and all the works of his hand and the events of his providence together in his thought. The majority of men alas! think but little, either of the operations of Nature or of the everflowing course of providential history; and, therefore, they connect not the Almighty with either: whilst the majority of those who do think on these subjects, exclude HIM from the circles of their studies. He is not in all their thoughts. They look upon one phenomenon in connection with another, and generalize a system of ideas to account for all. Everything they trace to some abstraction they call "law." What this law is, I know not; but it is a something which, in their system, divorces God from his creation—something which enables them to look at the universe as if it were a *self-acting* machine, going on from age to age, independently of all higher agency. The cause

* See chapter on "The Master Impulse of True Progress."

of this is to be found not in any of the *necessary* conditions of *true* philosophy. On the contrary, true philosophy demands that we should always seek a cause, at once *intelligible* and *adequate;* and this requirement would ever unite the universe, with all its existences, operations, and events, to its Almighty and Omnipotent Author. Thus, true philosophy binds, by the necessary laws of thought, the whole universe, even in its minutest parts, to God. But the cause of this exclusion of God from the sphere of thought, is in the heart—in the want of sympathy with Him.

Where the heart is full of love to Him, the intellect—the ever-willing servant of the affections,—makes Him the centre of all its thoughts; it traces all the winding streams of history to his throne, all the movements of nature to his hand. All its sciences are theological. He is the golden link in every chain of thought; He is its SUN, revealing and tinging all things within the ever-widening sweep of its action. It is love, not logic, that fills man's universe with God, and makes all things vocal with his thoughts, and radiant with his presence.

Another infallible symptom of true progress is:—

II. *An increasing interest in men, in proportion to their love of, and likeness to, God.* What an interest do we ever feel in those who either *love* or *resemble* the dearest objects of our hearts! The friends of a loved parent we feel dear to us, even at the first meeting. The children of old friends have a peculiar charm for us. Indeed, a disposition to love those who love and resemble our friends, is one of the laws that rule our hearts. In like manner, if we have the spirit of true progress—supreme love for the

Creator—the men whom we shall most respect and love, will be those who partake most of his nature and are most devoted to his glory; we shall see greatness and heroism only in those attributes which reflect The Divine. He, whose respect for man is regulated more by wealth, or lineage, or talent, or creed, or worldly honour, than by love to God and moral excellence, proves that he is destitute of the only spirit which can nerve him for the first step in the march of true being. The dwarfish sons of the world can see no greatness under the tattered garb of poverty—they court and compliment the rich; but the sons of progress "honour all men," because they are the offspring of God; and "love the brotherhood," because they love and resemble Him. They can reverence the dignity of paupers, and reprobate the degradation of kings. The poorest are to them the greatest, if they most honour and respect their God. I take a man's treatment of his brother as one of the surest tests of his own moral state. If, in his social intercourse and in the formation of friendships, he is governed more by worldly distinctions than moral principles—more by what a man *has* than by what he *is*, neither philosophy nor the Bible will allow us to regard him as having entered on the true path of progress. He is down in the narrow and misty region of conventionalities, where souls wither and die.

Another symptom of true progress is:—

III. *An increasing power over circumstances.* There is a class of men who propound the doctrine, that "man is the creature of circumstances." That there *are* men who are so, will not be questioned; and, perhaps, they are found in greater numbers amongst the advocates of that

dogma than elsewhere. The forces without are, to them, stronger than those within. They are fashioned by the outward. As the potter moulds his clay, the hand of externalism moulds them. As the straw on the bosom of the river, so they float on the current of events. Their spiritual powers bow to every passing incident, as the branches of the tender sapling to every gust of wind. I debate not their dogma, for it may be that *they*, are "the creatures of circumstances," that they have lost their normal independency, and are veritable slaves.

But I assert that in so far as man *is* the creature of circumstances, he is criminal and degraded. Heaven has endowed man in his constitution with powers to bend the outward to his will, and subordinate it to his spiritual interests. He is a moral cause. He is invested with powers of self-motion, self-direction, and self-control. He can hoist a sail to its fiercest opposing hurricane, and make it waft him to his desired haven. Like the Æolian harp, he can turn the tumult into music. Our power over circumstances is the measure of our progress. He who is ascending the true path of being, will feel less and less depressed by worldly trials, less and less elated with worldly prosperity.

Who does not see that where there is supreme sympathy with God, outward adversities will lead to cordial resignation, not to depression; and outward blessings to humble gratitude, not to inflated pride; and outward antagonism, not to a servile surrender, but to a triumphant struggle? In truth, this sympathy is *the* power of souls—the power by which they "subdue" all things, "overcome the world," and rise superior to all the hostile influences of matter and

of mind. What an eloquent writer says of genius, may be said of this *sympathy:* it "is nourished from within and without. Its food is self-grown and gathered. Like a rich-bearing tree, it absorbs the juices of the soil and the balm of the air, but draws from its own blood the life that swells out the trunk, and gives colour and flavour to the fruit."*

Another infallible symptom of true progress is:—

IV. *An increasing desire to render acceptable service to the Supreme.* It is an instinct of love to please its object. Its first question is, How shall I serve the dear one? What offering shall I present? What deed shall I perform that will meet with acceptance, and please? The *will* of the loved object is ever felt as a law, earnestly sought for, and rapturously obeyed. Even the will of the infant, for this reason, becomes law to the mother, at once the most imperative and delightful. Since the laws of mind are uniform and inviolable, this principle holds true when the ABSOLUTE ONE becomes the object of love. The WILL of man's object of *supreme* love, be that object the creature or the Creator, will ever *practically* be his *supreme* law—that which he will *regularly* and *cheerfully* obey.

As supreme sympathy with God, therefore, is the necessary spirit of true progress, wherever there is this progress there will be an *increasing* desire to serve Him. God has a will—a will in relation to our bodies, our intellects, our hearts and consciences—a will which nature teacheth as well as the Bible; and to find out, and work out, that will *cordially*, is an inevitable development of this affection.

* "Pleasures, Objects, and Advantages of Literature." By the Rev. Robt. Aris Willmott.

The first question at starting will be, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And in every step along the upward path there will be the prayer for a further knowledge of his will. The "meat and drink" of the advancing soul is to do the will of God—his will in business, in politics, in study, in religion, and in all the other relations of our being. Some do not regard God's will at all; some regard it in connection with certain departments of action, but not with all; and some regard it as embracing everything, and attend to it, not because it is the will of God, but because it is the supposed condition of happiness. Not one of all these classes is in the line of progress. He only who regards The Divine Will as the all-comprehending law—applying it to the least as well as the greatest things of life, and attends to it in all—not because it is the eternal condition of well-being, but because it *is the will* of One supremely loved—who does it as the gratification of his heart; he—he, I say, is the only man who is treading the ever-ascending path of life.

Another infallible symptom is:—

V. *An increasing consciousness of God's presence.* In proportion to our love of a being, is our desire to have him present. Where his personal form is separated from us by distance or death, love recalls him to our memory, ushers him into the inmost chambers of the soul, and makes him look as of old, but more loveably; and speak as of old, but more to the deepest heart. Thus we never lose a really loved friend until we lose our love for him: when most distant in space, most near to soul. Love commands the memory to bring him home and enshrine him within, where the eye of consciousness shall ever meet his loving glance. Many whom

death has veiled from the outward eye are more visible to the spirit than ever. It is a law, that strong love will ever keep its object near. In like manner, if the heart supremely loves God it will set him always before it. He will fill the whole sphere of thought and being, as the air fills the countless lives of earth—as the sun the noon of day. Thus, if you are really advancing, you will, like Enoch, "walk with God;" feel Him present in every scene and step of life; be far more sensible of Him than you are of the omnipresent air that fills your lungs, or the noon-tide beams that sparkle on your eye-ball. You will look at everything through God. He will be your all-in-all. Your experience will be that of the Seraphim and Cherubim in Festus; and you will be able to sing with them,

> "Thou fill'st our eyes
> As were the skies
> One burning, boundless sun;
> While creature mind
> In path confined
> Passeth a spot thereon."

Another infallible symptom of true progress is:—

VI. *An increasing superiority to all self-seeking.* There is a tendency in love to absorb self in the object. How often do you see the loving mother and the wife, yes, and the loving father and the husband, too, forget themselves, overtask their energies, and impair their health, in their generous efforts to make happy the dear objects of their love! Has not the true patriot often lost all ideas of self-interest in the rolling flood of patriotism, when his country has been imperilled? Is not the self of the martyr ever lost in the whelming tide of his godly affections? It is a

law of our nature that we lose sense of self in proportion to our love for another. If, therefore, we have the spirit of true progress—supreme love for God, we shall be free from all self-seeking. We shall not live unto ourselves, we shall not seek our own; "we shall rest from our own works;"—works starting from personal considerations and aiming at personal ends.

This self-renunciation does not imply indifference to our own powers, prerogatives, and functions; nor is it that morbid self-renunciation and self-mortification which are propounded and practised in some churches; nor the neglect of self-culture and improvement. No, in this self-renunciation, we have the perfect realization of our individual rights, the development of our individual powers, and the satisfying of our individual desires. It is the *necessary* condition of our well-being. It is the only mode of being which is congenial to our nature and favourable to our interests. The plant only reaches its perfection, as it yields itself up to the free influence of nature, throws forth its odours on every breeze, and spreads forth its beauties to every eye. Nor can the human soul ever realize a *full, perfect, and happy* development of its powers, but as it is swayed by universal love, and gives out its properties to the good of the great system to which it belongs. We must go out of self, lose its very sight, be filled with God, in order to fill self with joy.

We shall mention but one more infallible symptom of true progress.

VII. *An increasing assimilation to the Divine character.* We always assimilate to the object of our love. Love impresses us with the attributes of its object, and transforms

us into their image. Hence, the young become like the companions they love, and children grow up in the image of their parents—their representatives—even in the minutiæ of character. The assimilating power of love is ever regulated by the *strength* of the affection and the *superiority* of the object over its lover. The greater has always the more moulding force, especially when he is the more loved. This is another law of mind, most undeviating and manifest in its operations. And from it we infer, with the greatest assurance, that if supreme sympathy with God is the spirit of true progress, the advancing soul must be gradually assimilating Him. In this case there is the *supremacy* of the affection and the infinite *superiority* of the object; and, consequently, the highest assimilating power. But, it may be said, In *what* does the progressive spirit become like God? Not, of course, in any physical attribute; but in the *spirit* of his moral character, which is benevolence. All his moral attributes may be resolved into this principle, and all the operations of his hand may be traced to it. We become like God—in the scriptural sense "partakers of The Divine Nature"—just as we come under the presiding sway of that benevolence which lies at the basis of his character, and is the primordial impulse of his acts. To assimilate thus to Him is the duty and interest of every intelligence. Variety in the physical world is one of its greatest charms. In neither earth, nor air, nor sea, nor sky, will you find two objects identical; each has some distinctive feature, which, like each of the notes in music, contributes to the fulness of its charms. It is so, too, in the intellectual world. Minds, though agreeing in essence and laws, differ widely in the relative force of their emotions

and faculties. But variety, which in the regions of matter and intellect, is proper and beautiful, in morals, is wrong and odious. All mind should be swayed by the same disposition. The child, the man, the humblest spirit, and the loftiest seraph, should be controlled in everything by the same principle which pervades the mind of God. This is moral harmony. True progress is progress in this disposition.

Such, then, are some of the most salient symptoms of true progress. Its master impulse, supreme sympathy with God, is the "spirit that beareth witness with our spirits," that we are advancing.* It is *the* witness of the fact, and its testimony is varied, clear, and conclusive. No one need be either in ignorance or in doubt of his spiritual position. Is your tendency to view all subjects in their connection with God increasing? Is your interest in men proportioned to their love of, and their likeness to, The Eternal? Are you obtaining a greater regal power over external circumstances? Is your desire to render acceptable service to The GREAT ONE gaining more practical strength? Is your cherished consciousness of His presence ever heightening? Are you losing more and more all thoughts of self-interest in the great idea of God and His universe? Are you

* I introduce this passage here, not altogether as an accommodation. It seems to me very probable that such is its Pauline sense. The apostle in the context, Rom. viii. 14—16, uses the same word πνεῦμα in three different applications:—first, to designate "the spirit of God," v. 14; secondly, to designate the disposition of the mind—the "spirit of adoption," v. 15; and thirdly, the human mind—"our spirit," v. 16. By the spirit itself, therefore, he *may* mean *the filial disposition*, and then the sense would be what we have taken above.

getting more and more assimilated in spirit to the essence of His character, which is love?

If you can answer these questions affirmatively, my brother, I congratulate you. You have the *true* "root of the matter" in you. "For," as the text has it, "of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes."* You are in the "way of life," you are treading in the footprints of all the sainted dead; following in the wake of the great ones, of whom you have read in history, and of angels, the "eldest born of God." Its first stages are rough and thorny, here and there beset with enemies and overcast with clouds. But take heart, it is better farther on. Every successive step improves. Farther on, you will find no thorns, but in every step you will tread out the fragrance of the sweetest flowers. Farther on, you will meet with no foe; but kindred spirits, with their great thoughts, wise and loving, will cheer you on the way. Farther on, and no dark cloud will throw its gloomy shadows over you; you shall have the brightest stars at night, and nought but sunshine in the day. Farther on, the prospect heightens; the valleys are richer and the mountains grander. Flowers of lovelier hue and sweeter fragrance are there; trees of statelier mould deck the landscape, and rivers and lakes, more pellucid and majestic, refresh and beautify the scene. Take heart, my brother, it is better farther on!

* Luke vi. 44.

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